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THE FOURTH GOSPEL

ITS PURPOSE AND THEOLOGY

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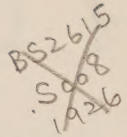

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PREFACE

IN the following study of the theology of the Fourth Gospel I have ventured to assume, without preliminary statement, the results of the critical investigation. An adequate discussion of the Johannine problem would have almost doubled the size of the volume, and could have been little more than a reiteration of facts and arguments already familiar to all students of the recent literature. It has been apparent, for some time past, that all the available material for forming a judgment on the date and authorship of the Gospel has now been collected and thoroughly sifted. Different writers arrive at different conclusions, but are unable to make any real addition to the evidence.

The position assumed in this book is that which is now generally accepted by Continental scholars. A more conservative opinion is still, for the most part, maintained in this country; and has recently been defended by Drs. Stanton and Sanday, and by Principal Drummond of Manchester College, Oxford. The learning and ability displayed by these writers, and more especially by the last-named,

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it would be difficult to overpraise. Dr. Drummond, however, while arguing for the Johannine authorship of the Gospel, falls back on a view of its theology which seems hard to reconcile with his main thesis; while he proves at most, by his exhaustive inquiry into patristic evidence, that the work must have been in existence at an early date in the second century. With this conclusion few competent scholars would now be inclined to disagree.

It may be granted that the external evidence is not sufficient to warrant a decisive verdict on either side; and any further discussion even of the critical problem must concern itself mainly with the Gospel itself. Which of the views regarding its date and authorship will best explain the many difficulties presented by its internal character? The answer to this question seems, to my own mind, to admit of little doubt.

I am convinced that the Gospel has nothing to lose by a fearless analysis of its teaching in the light of what appears the more probable theory of its origin. The real message of John, as I have endeavoured to make clear, is independent of the theological forms imposed upon him by the thought of his time. A better apprehension of the essential meaning of this "spiritual Gospel" can only be a gain to Christian faith.

My obligations to previous writers are so numerous, that I have decided to dispense altogether with special references in footnotes. I owe cordial thanks to my brother, Rev. Ebenezer Scott, B.D., of Liverpool, who has helped me in the work of revision, and has offered many valuable suggestions.

E. F. SCOTT.

PRESTWICK,
31*st October* 1906.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE alterations which I have made in the present edition are almost all concerned with matters of minor detail. My thanks are due to various friends (some of them previously unknown to me) who have drawn my attention to misprints and inaccuracies which had escaped my notice in the reading of the proofs.

I am sensible that my account of the Johannine theology is in many points inadequate; but the defects could hardly have been remedied by anything short of a thoroughgoing revision of the book. From the criticisms which I have received I have learned much. I am particularly indebted to an able and searching review by Professor Walter Lock, in the *Journal of Theological Studies*, for April 1908. They have modified my opinions on several questions of a subordinate nature; but my view of the main character and teaching of the Fourth Gospel has only been confirmed by further study.

E. F. SCOTT.

PRESTWICK,
5th May 1908.

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THE FOURTH GOSPEL

ITS PURPOSE AND THEOLOGY

CHAPTER I

CHARACTER AND INTENTION

"MANY other signs did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name." In these words, which form the close of the original Gospel, the Fourth Evangelist has himself indicated the general scope and character of his work. He declares, in the first place, that he has not aimed at presenting a complete and consecutive account of the life of Jesus. He has made a selection from the material before him, and deliberately omitted a large number of facts. Again, he acknowledges that his main purpose in making this selection has been to impress a certain belief on the minds of his readers. The narrative is composed with the set

intention of proving that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

The fundamental difference between the Fourth Gospel and the Synoptics is thus marked out explicitly by John himself. His statement may be contrasted with that of Luke in the address to Theophilus with which he prefaces his Gospel. The writer's design, as there indicated, is simply to record the facts, in a narrative more exact and orderly, more complete in detail, than those which were already in circulation. This fidelity to the historical tradition was undoubtedly the chief aim of the Synoptic writers. Their work may here and there bear traces of theological colouring, but their first interest was in the facts. Their part was not to interpret, but simply to record, as clearly and faithfully as they might, the actual events on which the new religion based itself. John, on the other hand, starts with a certain conception of the Person and life of Christ, and reads the facts in the light of it. They are valuable to him only as they afford evidence and illustration of a given belief. For this reason he dispenses with the fuller historical detail and contents himself with a few outstanding episodes, which witness in a signal manner to the divine worth of Jesus Christ.

Writing as he does with an express theological intention, John not only selects his material but adapts and modifies it. This result followed necessarily from his method. The historian who approaches his subject with a strong pre-possession sees all the events from one particular point of

view; unconsciously to himself he alters the perspective, and reads his own meaning into words and incidents, and disregards circumstances which seem to him immaterial. This, as becomes apparent from the most superficial comparison with the Synoptics, has been the procedure of the Fourth Evangelist. The import of the fact is always more valuable to him than the fact itself. Incidents are transposed in order to fit in more effectively with the general plan, and are so described as to bring out their hidden purport. In his endeavour to accentuate the meaning of his story the writer is led naturally to introduce a large element of spoken discourse. Each incident is followed by a speech or a dialogue in which its inward significance is unfolded, and these discourses appear to be composed freely, according to the method employed in the narrative proper. Words actually uttered by Jesus are expanded and interpreted. Sayings are ascribed to Him which He may not literally have spoken, but which express His essential thought, as the evangelist conceived it.

John tells us, then, that he wrote with a definite purpose, which guided him in the treatment of his material. He proceeds to describe that purpose as a twofold one, "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life through His name." His interest on the one hand is in the historical Person of Jesus, in whom he recognises the Son of God revealed in the flesh. But he desires at the same time to emphasise the abiding value and purpose of the historical life.

Jesus Christ was more than a wonderful figure in the past. His appearance on earth had been only the beginning of a larger, enduring life, and it was still possible for His people to maintain fellowship with Him and to receive His quickening. The central purpose of the gospel is defined in these words, "that ye may have life through His name." In the Jesus who passes before us as a Person in history we are meant also to recognise the eternal Christ, who is still revealed, as an inward, life-giving presence, to those that believe in Him.

One significant phrase in this passage, which forms John's own account of the aim and character of his work, may be taken as the point of departure for a larger survey. "That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." The Messianic title of Jesus is here co-ordinated with a higher title, or rather is superseded by it; and this use of the double title may be regarded as an index to the nature of the Gospel as a whole. It is a work of transition, in which primitive Christianity is carried over into a different world of thought.

1. The transition, in the first place, is from one age to another. The date which may be assigned to the Gospel with a fair degree of certainty (the first or second decade of the second century) coincides with the most critical period in the history of the Church. In that third generation after Christ the new religion had became finally separated from its historical origins. The last representatives of the Apostolic age had passed away. The primitive hopes and impulses had spent themselves. The

bonds with the mother religion of Judaism, which Paul had loosened, had been definitely broken. If Christianity was to endure as a living faith, it had to embody itself in new forms and come to an understanding with the ideas and interests of the modern time. It was the work of the Fourth Evangelist to transplant the religion of Christ into the new soil before its roots had had time to wither. From the age immediately behind him, in which the primitive tradition was still a living force, he carried the gospel over into his own generation. To perform this task, it was not enough simply to transmit the facts. Jesus had appeared at a given time in history, and His teaching had been influenced and in some respects limited by the conditions of that time, which had now fallen into the past. If the message was to continue as a life-giving power, it must be re-interpreted in terms of the new modes of thinking. The story of Christ's coming must be told in fresh language, with a different emphasis, so that it might appeal to the second century as it had done to the first.

Moreover, in the course of its hundred years of development the original Christian message had unfolded itself into a far larger significance. The great mind of Paul had worked on it. The experience of a growing church, gathered out of many different races and classes, had thrown new lights on its meaning. Even the heresies which had sprung up from time to time had served to suggest the wider bearings of genuine Christian truths. These later developments seemed, at first

sight, alien to the primitive gospel, but they had grown out of it, and belonged to its real import. To understand the work of Christ it was necessary not only to consider His actual life and teaching, but to take into account this great movement to which He had given the impulse. The Evangelist in his picture of Jesus invests Him with the grandeur which in His lifetime had not been fully apparent. He reads into His recorded words the deeper meanings which they had disclosed to later thinkers. He presents the facts of the divine life, not as men saw them at the time, but as they appeared long afterwards in the retrospect of an enlightened faith.

2. Again, there is a transition not only to a new age, but to a different culture. In order that the religion might naturalise itself in the larger Gentile world to which, since the days of Paul, it had chiefly appealed, it required to find expression in the Hellenic modes of thought. Paul himself had adopted Greek categories into his thinking, but his system as a whole was Jewish in character, imperfectly intelligible to the Hellenic mind. The writer of the Fourth Gospel, not content with employing a Greek idea here and there, attempts an entire re-statement of the Christian message in terms of the current philosophy. Jesus, according to the primitive tradition, was the Messiah, who had come to inaugurate the promised kingdom of God. In the Fourth Gospel the Messianic idea is replaced by that of the Logos. The proclamation of the kingdom becomes the message of "eternal

Life." Jewish conceptions are translated in almost every instance into the language of Greek speculation. It was impossible thus to transpose the Christian doctrine without modifying, often to a serious extent, its original character. The Greek ideas which John employs never correspond more than partially with the ideas of Jesus, and are sometimes alien to the whole spirit of His teaching. Yet it may fairly be argued that the Hellenic form is in some respects more adequate than the Jewish. There was a breadth and idealism in the thought of Jesus which transcended the limits imposed on Him by the Jewish modes of utterance. We cannot but feel in reading the Synoptic Gospels that He has sometimes to pour new wine into old bottles, to overstrain the language and imagery of traditional Hebrew thought in order to find expression for His message. The ideas of the Messiah and the kingdom of God, to take the most signal instances, meant infinitely more to the mind of Jesus than the names themselves could be made to signify. He was continually hampered by the inadequacy of the names, which as a Jewish teacher He was nevertheless constrained to use. The Fourth Evangelist, when he breaks with the literal tradition, and substitutes the language of Greek reflection for the actual words employed by Jesus, is not necessarily unfaithful to the Master's teaching. On the contrary, he gives truer expression in many cases to the intrinsic thought. There were elements in the gospel message, and these among the most valuable, which could not come to their own until

they had received a new embodiment in Hellenic forms.

3. In yet a third way, as has been already indicated, the work of John effects a transition. It carries over the revelation of Christ from the world of outward fact to that of inward religious experience. At the time when the Gospel was written, that critical time which followed the close of the Apostolic age, Christianity was threatened with two great dangers, either of which would have destroyed its power as a living religion. There was a tendency on the one hand to dissolve the historical fact of the life of Jesus into a vague speculation. His life had now receded into the past; and the second generation, to which His personal influence had been mediated by His own disciples, had likewise disappeared. It seemed as if nothing remained but to sublimate the actual history into a philosophical allegory and so make it yield a certain permanent value. The other tendency, opposite to this, was equally destructive of vital faith. There were those who clung to the mere reminiscence, which was fading more and more into the distance. Their religion was wholly a matter of tradition, and was destitute of inward impulse and spiritual reality. Christianity, once separated from its historical beginnings, seemed to have no choice but to proceed in one or other of these two directions,—either to evaporate as a philosophy or to petrify as a mechanical tradition. That it was able to continue as a living faith was due mainly to the work of John. He presented

the life of Jesus in its eternal meaning, and showed how true discipleship was still possible to those who had not seen and yet had believed. He claimed that this inward fellowship was even closer and more real than the outward one. And at the same time he assigned to the historical fact of Christ's appearance its necessary value. From the empty speculations of his time he went back to the actual record, and insisted that the Christ who manifests Himself to faith is one with Him who lived among us. His larger work, His eternal presence, cannot be understood apart from that historical revelation. It is the supreme service of the Fourth Evangelist that he interpreted the vision of faith by the light of the Gospel story. He ensured for all time that the Christ of inward experience should be no ideal abstraction, but the living Master who had once been manifest in the flesh.

In these three well-marked directions the Gospel is a work of transition, and this fact explains not a few of its main difficulties. The writer had to deal with diverse elements, and has not wholly succeeded in fusing them. His general purpose was to re-mould the original tradition according to his new conception of its meaning, but there was much in it that could neither be discarded nor yet find a natural place in the altered plan. Again and again we meet with isolated ideas which cannot be reconciled with the characteristic Johannine thought. They can only be regarded as fragments of the earlier doctrine that have simply

been taken over without any, or with a very imperfect, attempt at assimilation. It is customary to speak of these alien fragments (the more important of which will be considered in due place) as "concessions" made by the evangelist to current modes of belief. This account of them, however, is scarcely just. A thinker who is reaching forward to a larger conception of truth does not break entirely with the common beliefs of his age. Even when they clash with his own belief he is not himself fully conscious of the opposition, and still allows room for them in his scheme of thought, although in spirit he has transcended them. John "concedes" no doctrine which he does not himself share with the primitive Church, but many of the doctrines thus taken over from the earlier time have ceased to be vital to him. They are incorporated in his work without in any way modifying its inward character.

Apart, however, from these alien fragments which do not enter into its substance, the Gospel is by no means uniform in its presentation of doctrine. The author, writing in a period of transition, is continually striving to find place within the same system for opposite types of thought and belief. He recognises the elements of truth in widely different conceptions, and seeks to preserve them all and to make them supplement and illuminate each other. This union of opposites which meets us constantly in the Gospel has led to the most diverse views as to its ultimate character and intention. It has been represented as a

Gnostic manifesto, and as an orthodox reply to Gnosticism; as a vindication of the historical facts, and as a bold attempt to explain them away; as a thoroughgoing exposition of the Logos idea, and as a simple narrative in which the Logos idea disappears after the prologue. Some critics find it dominated by a polemical interest, but differ as to the object of the polemic; others interpret it as an ecclesiastical document, or as a work of speculation, or as a manual of practical religion. The Gospel offers itself to this wide variety of explanations, all of which can be supported more or less convincingly. It stands, as a matter of fact, at the conflux of many different currents in the life and thought of the Christian Church, and cannot be explained by any one hypothesis. We have rather to acknowledge the diversity of its teaching, and to see in this one chief element in its permanent value. More than any other book in the New Testament it has witnessed to the comprehensiveness of Christianity, and has afforded a meeting-ground for all the different types of religious temperament and thought.

The blending of various tendencies which marks the Gospel as a whole is no less visible when we examine its teaching in detail. Only a few examples, which will be considered more fully at a later stage, need be offered in illustration. The "world" is regarded sometimes as wholly evil,—the realm of darkness over against the light; and elsewhere as the object of the love of God. Man, according to one order of passages, decides for

himself whether he will respond to Christ; according to another, he is determined by a power outside of him. The miracles of Jesus are alternately put forward as the main proof of His divine claims, and disparaged as a quite secondary evidence. An intellectual view of religion is combined with a strongly ethical view. The idea of an eternal life in the future stands side by side with that of a life realised here and now. The sacraments are regarded as mystically efficacious in themselves, and again set aside as mere symbols of the true spiritual influences. The Church as an outward institution is put in the forefront, and on the other hand religion is identified with an inward, personal fellowship with Christ. The Spirit is another name for the exalted Christ, and almost in the same verse a separate power. "Belief," which is sometimes hardly to be distinguished from the Pauline "faith," is elsewhere little more than an intellectual assent. The number of examples might be multiplied almost indefinitely if we took into account the minor discrepancies in John's thought. Nearly every sentence in the Gospel might be paralleled with another which appears to indicate a view of different tenor.

These inconsistencies, whether real or apparent, can be partly accounted for by the peculiar position of the writer, who stands between two epochs, two worlds of culture. But we shall find that to a large extent they have their roots in one grand antinomy which pervades the Gospel from end to end, and creates an actual cleavage in its religious teaching.

The revelation through Christ is explained in the prologue as a temporary appearance in the flesh of the eternal Logos. This doctrine of the Logos, borrowed through Philo from the Greek philosophical thinkers, had nothing to do with the original Christian message. For the ethical view of the Person and life of Jesus it substituted a view which can only be described as metaphysical. Christ as Logos was a heavenly being, different in nature from man; and nothing could be predicated of Him except that He was eternal, self-existent, one from the beginning with God. The evangelist sets out with this conception, and there can be little doubt that it pervades his whole narrative, although he does not revert after the prologue to the express Philonic term. But no one can read the Gospel in any spirit of sympathy without feeling that the theological view is combined with another of altogether different character. To John, as to the Synoptic writers, the revelation has come through the actual life of Jesus, and he seeks to explain by his theory of the incarnate Logos the impression which that life has made on him. He has recourse to the highest of philosophical categories in order to justify his faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Life-giver. The doctrine of the Logos was, however, by its very nature inadequate to his purpose. It belonged to a world of abstract speculation, and Jesus had revealed the Father by His love and goodness, by the moral glory and divineness of His life. In the Fourth Gospel we have really two distinct conceptions, which are con-

stantly interchanging but can never be reconciled. Jesus is, on the one hand, the Logos, a supernatural being who makes God manifest because He partakes Himself of the divine essence. On the other hand, He is the Saviour whom we know, who dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. The Gospel moves throughout on these two conceptions of the Christian revelation, and they are never brought into real harmony. Instead of vainly striving to harmonise them, we have to acknowledge an inner contradiction which affects the Johannine teaching at its very centre.

The frequent oppositions of thought that meet us in the Gospel are traceable, therefore, to two main causes. An earlier type of Christian belief is combined with another which had arisen at a later time in a different environment; and a revelation given through a historical life is interpreted by means of a philosophical doctrine, with which it cannot, in any true sense, be reconciled. But we must further allow due weight to the temperament of the writer himself, who with all his speculative genius is not primarily a theologian, but a man of profound religious feeling. Ideas flow in upon him from various sources—from primitive Christian tradition, Paulinism, Alexandrian speculation; and he does not attempt to reason them out, or to co-ordinate them into a system. They may stand in mutual contradiction, but as long as he responds to them with some side of his religious nature he is willing to accept them. He tests them, not by any

logical criterion, but by an inward tact and sympathy. Hence the widely different elements that find a place side by side within his Gospel; and hence also the indefinable unity in which these conflicting elements are held together. They have all formed part of a living experience, and have a spiritual affinity to each other even when they appear most diverse. It is here, perhaps, that we come upon the crucial difficulty in the interpretation of this writing of John. We have to deal not so much with a thinker whose system may be examined by the ordinary logical rules, as with a unique religious temperament. Ignorant as we are of the personality of the writer, we are for ever deprived of the ultimate key to his Gospel.

It is necessary to bear in mind that the Johannine thought, even more than the Pauline, is bound up with a personal temperament and experience. The theology of Paul would in great measure be a riddle to us if we knew nothing of the individual life out of which it had shaped itself. Our knowledge of the man himself, of his early training, his conversion and the circumstances that led up to it, his activities as an Apostle, his personal sympathies and characteristics,—supplies the light in which his whole thought becomes intelligible. In the case of John we have no such light, and have to feel our way dimly, with the help of some vague acquaintance with the times and conditions in which he worked and the sources from which he drew. The result has been that criticism has too often attempted to construe his

Gospel externally. It has been treated as little more than a compilation in which various fragments of earlier systems are pieced together, while the personal factor has been left entirely out of sight. Now it cannot be too strongly emphasised that this factor, which is outside our range of knowledge, is yet the ultimate and all-important one. Whatever is borrowed from previous thinkers is not simply taken over, but is penetrated with new meanings; and much as we are assisted in the right understanding of the Gospel by various collateral lines of research, we have to deal in the last resort with the writer himself, and his own individual conception of the message of Christ.

The individual character of the work is strikingly marked in the very method of its composition. It has been noted already that John did not set himself to write a complete history, but only to enforce a given view of the Christian revelation in the light of selected facts. He is thus left free to shape his narrative on a deliberate artistic plan, and it unfolds itself with something of the ordered majesty and simplicity of a Greek tragedy. First, in a solemn prologue, our minds are prepared for the action which is to follow; and then the divine life passes before us in its few cardinal episodes. In the first four chapters the Light is seen rising on the world, and all men appear to welcome it and respond to it. Then follows a period of uncertainty, when friends and enemies begin to take their sides (v. and vi.). In

the next section (vii.–xii.) the world settles down into definite antagonism, while the few whom Jesus has chosen are drawn to Him ever more closely. At last He is left alone with this small company of His true disciples, and reveals His inmost heart to them in the quiet of the supper-room (xiii.–xvii.). Meanwhile the hatred of His enemies, like the love of His chosen friends, has reached its height, and in the remaining chapters we see Him overwhelmed by the powers of darkness, yet in the end rising victorious.

The story thus groups itself around one central motive, that of the judgment, the sifting out of men, effected by the coming of Christ. After the first wonder has spent itself, the two classes of children of light and children of darkness begin to emerge definitely. Those who are repelled from Jesus become more intensely hostile, while those who accept Him are won to an always deeper and more intimate faith. This separation of men by their attitude to the Light is the governing motive of the book, and as such it serves an artistic as well as a theological purpose. By his conception of Jesus as the Logos, the writer was compelled to regard Him as a stationary figure. There could be no inward development of His character or consciousness, no reaction of circumstances upon His life. As the story of the Incarnate Logos the Gospel could be nothing more than a series of repetitions, without any real sequence or unifying interest. The difficulty is overcome by the aid of that other motive, which enables the narrative to

march forward with a natural dramatic progress. Jesus Himself remains sovereign and impassive, awaiting His "hour"; but the effect of His presence on the world becomes more and more decisive. A judgment is in process, and we follow it stage by stage to the great climax.

The deliberate artistic purpose which governs the main structure of the Gospel is apparent also in matters of detail. Every reader has been struck with the contrast between the prevailing tone of mystical thought and the vivid realism of many of the separate pictures. The book abounds in clearly drawn portraits of character. Disciples who in the Synoptics are little more than names stand out in John with definitely marked features. The more prominent actors in the history (*e.g.* Peter, Judas, Pilate) are carefully individualised. Even those persons who have no real part in the action, and are only introduced for the purposes of doctrinal discussion (Nicodemus, the woman of Samaria, the blind man), are endowed with some distinctness of character. In like manner the writer delights in little pictorial touches which serve to give a concrete reality to his narrative. He records dates, hours, names of places. He works out special episodes with a wealth of lively detail. He adds an individual reference to vague statements in the Synoptics. (Peter was the man who struck, and Malchus the man wounded; Judas objected to the waste of ointment; Thomas is the representative of the "some who doubted.") He introduces, often with wonderful effect, dramatic

contrasts and circumstances. ("And it was night." "Jesus wept." "Behold the man!" "What is truth?") These are but a few examples of that study of the vivid and concrete which forms one of the best marked characteristics of the Fourth Gospel, abstract and theological as it is in its main teaching. The favourite argument for the general authenticity of the narrative is based on this feature in its composition, but the force of the argument disappears on closer analysis. It can be shown that many of the apparently lifelike details have a symbolic value, and are in reality nothing but veiled allegorical allusions. Possibly, if we had an adequate clue to the evangelist's aims and methods, a side-reference of this kind could be discovered in almost every instance. Apart, however, from its allegorical value, the picturesque detail in John's narrative can be set down, not to the accurate memory of the eye-witness, but to the fine instinct of the literary artist. All the more that the prevailing tenor of his work was abstract and meditative, he felt the need of relieving it with touches of livelier colour.

The elaborate character of the work becomes still more apparent when we look with closer attention at its inner structure. A manner of writing is adopted which admits of singularly little variation, so that it is difficult at times to distinguish between the words of Jesus Himself and the commentary which follows them. This monotony of the Johannine style, due to a certain uniform, semi-rhythmical construction of sentence, has often

been remarked. It is evidently intentional, and imparts to the whole book an air of majesty and religious awe, in keeping with its high argument. A similar uniformity is traceable in the conduct of almost all the dialogue in which Jesus takes part. The method invariably adopted is this;—a dark saying is thrown out by Jesus which is misapprehended by His hearers, and He then repeats the original saying, and proceeds to amplify and explain it. Whole chapters (*e.g.* v. vi. viii.) consist of a series of such dark utterances, misunderstood and then interpreted. A regular method is likewise followed in regard to the miracles. They are performed by Jesus on His own initiative, and embody great spiritual truths which are not apparent to the onlookers. Thus they serve as introductions to the several discourses, in which they are expounded in their inward significance.

The allegorical nature of many of the incidents and allusions contained in the Gospel has already been indicated. In the case of the miracles, John himself invites us to consider the outward event as the vehicle of a hidden meaning; and his narrative, down to its minutest details, appears to be saturated with symbolism. Even where his chief interest is to record facts as they actually happened, he is careful to place them in such a light as to bring out a deeper spiritual import which was concealed in them. A conspicuous example is the incident of the spear-thrust, vouched for in the most emphatic manner as strictly historical. It was the unanswerable proof that Jesus really died upon the Cross, and

the evangelist is solicitous, above all, to establish the fact. Yet even here the outward event merges in the symbol. The water and blood that issued from the side of Christ typify the double work effected by Him, and the two sacraments in which it is appropriated by the believer. In like manner throughout the Gospel we have to reckon with a strain of allegorical intention woven in at every point with the narrative proper. "Earthly things" are to this writer the shadow of "heavenly things," and they are chiefly valuable to him for the sake of those higher truths dimly reflected in them.

A particular interest attaches itself in this connection to John's use of numbers. In view of his relation to the allegorical school of Philo, we are prepared to find the mystical value of numbers playing a part in his work, and this expectation is borne out to a greater extent than is at first evident. Definite allusions are indeed comparatively few, but it has often been noted that a numerical scheme appears to be constantly before his mind. Jesus makes His journey thrice to Galilee and thrice to Jerusalem; there are three Passovers and three other feasts; the Baptist makes three appearances as witness; Jesus is thrice condemned, speaks thrice from the Cross, appears three times after His Resurrection. Seven, the other sacred number, is likewise prominent. There are seven miracles, seven references to the "hour"; the formula "I am," introducing some type under which Jesus describes Himself, occurs seven times, as also the solemn

asseveration, "These things I have spoken to you," in the final discourse. It even seems probable that the structure of the Gospel as a whole is determined by these two numbers, three and seven. The book can be articulated into seven main sections, each of which falls naturally into three main parts; and a still further subdivision on the basis of the sacred numbers can be carried out with sufficient plausibility. This method of analysis is at best conjectural and may easily be overstrained, but it is distinctly possible that John worked consciously on a scheme of numbers in the composition of his work. Such a plan might seem at first sight to place a fatal restraint on the free activity of genius, but we have instances of great creative work—for example, the poem of Dante—produced under still stricter limitations. To minds of a certain type the observance of a rigid system is no burden, but rather a necessary condition to elevated and harmonious thought.

Enough has been said to prove that the Fourth Gospel, in outward appearance so unstudied and spontaneous, is in reality a work of complex art. It bears traces of elaborate design, alike in its plan as a whole and in all its separate details. We are prepared, therefore, to discover a similar complexity in the content of the Gospel. We can assume that in its thought as in its composition it is not simple, but is full of hidden intention, and meaning involved in meaning. This will become increasingly evident as we examine more closely into its religious and theological teaching.

Meanwhile a new light is thrown on the broad question which meets us at the outset,—What is the aim with which this Fourth Gospel was written? In view of the evangelist's express statement, the answer to this question might seem to present little difficulty. He wrote in a purely religious interest, "that, believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, ye might have life through His name." This statement does not, however, cover the whole purpose of the Gospel. It arose, like the other New Testament writings, out of the immediate life and needs of the early Church; and we cannot but feel, when we study it with some attention, that the religious aim is combined with a more practical one. Again and again we come on passages that seem capable of a double interpretation. They can be explained, quite naturally, in the light of that larger purpose which the writer professes to have kept before him; but they have a bearing, still more direct and evident, on certain definite questions that agitated the Church at a given time.

What, then, was the real aim of our evangelist? Are we to regard him as a purely religious teacher, concerned only with the timeless element in Christianity? Or was he rather a man of his age, whose thought was chiefly determined by the immediate conditions under which he lived? Much of the discussion which in recent times has gathered around these questions becomes irrelevant when allowance is made for the element of complexity that belongs to the very essence of the Fourth Gospel. It is fair to assume that in such a work a number of

intentions may be equally present, and so involved with one another that they cannot easily be separated. There is no reason to set aside John's own statement when he declares that his aim was in the first instance religious; but this paramount aim was complicated in his mind with others, imposed on him by the particular circumstances of his time. They can be traced with more or less distinctness in every chapter of the work, and continually influence its main teaching.

These subordinate aims may be grouped, for the sake of convenience, under two divisions. In the first place, the evangelist seeks to repel the attacks to which Christianity was subject, from several different sides, in the early years of the second century. His narrative is so presented as to serve an urgent polemical interest. He writes, in the second place, as a representative of the Church, with the object of building up the Church idea. It might seem, indeed, that nothing could be further removed from the field of ecclesiastical debate than this "spiritual Gospel" of John. The Church is not once alluded to by name; the mind of the writer dwells among eternal truths which appear to have little to do with Church politics and controversies. None the less we shall find reason to believe that the thought of the Church is constantly present to him. The story of the beginnings of Christianity is described in such a manner as to adumbrate the later development, in which an ordered community, with its set laws and sacraments, continued the work of Christ. A

whole region of John's thinking becomes intelligible only when we take account of this ecclesiastical interest which underlies his Gospel.

It need hardly be said that this division is not to be regarded as a strict one. The polemical purpose intersects at every turn with that which we have defined as the ecclesiastical; and in like manner both of the subordinate aims fall into harmony with the supreme religious aim. Written as it is with a threefold strain of intention, the Gospel impresses us throughout with a sense of magnificent unity. The complex elements of which it is composed are all fused and vitalised by the prevailing motive,—"that ye may believe in the Son of God, and have life through His name."

Here, again, the method of the Fourth Evangelist may in some measure be illustrated from that of Dante. The poem, like the Gospel, is governed by a spiritual purpose, and depends on this for its whole power and meaning. Blended, however, with the central purpose, there are various subordinate aims which may often seem to have little relation to it. The poet concerns himself with the politics of his time, with the theological controversies, with the many-sided intellectual movement, so that the higher intention is sometimes half buried. It cannot be maintained on that account that the quarrel of Guelph and Ghibelline is the whole key to the Divine Comedy; and just as little can we interpret the Fourth Gospel by dwelling exclusively on its minor issues. These have their place and cannot be overlooked, but the religious

aim is paramount, and everything else must be explained in the light of it.

A few of the more striking characteristics of the Gospel have thus been indicated, and require to be borne in mind as we proceed to the more detailed criticism. It has been seen, in the first place, that John, by his own testimony, is not so much the reporter of historical facts, as a religious teacher who seeks to get behind the facts to their essential import. To his mind the idea was everything, and the outward event a mere shell and symbol. He considers it not only permissible but necessary to re-shape the tradition in order to render it transparent, more clearly significant of the spiritual truth conveyed in it. Again, his work was in more ways than one the product of an age of transition. It presented the Christian message to a new time, under the forms of a different culture. It sought to unite in one picture the two revelations of Christ,—that which He had given through His earthly life, and that which He still gives through His inward, eternal presence. Johannine theology thus represents the mingling of several currents of thought which do not altogether lose the traces of their original diversity. We meet constantly with types of doctrine which are not entirely harmonised, which even stand in mutual contradiction. The actual reminiscence of Jesus is combined throughout with a metaphysical theory derived from Greek speculation. Once more, the Gospel is no simple, spontaneous utterance, as it might appear to be, but a

work of elaborate art. In its most casual allusions we need to be prepared for some deeper allegorical meaning concealed beneath the immediate one. Its main religious intention is interwoven continually with various subordinate aims, polemical and ecclesiastical. The evangelist, so far as we know him from his work, was no secluded thinker, but an active leader of the Church in a difficult time. His Gospel is the purest exposition of the absolute religious spirit; but we have also to regard it as a contemporary document, written in the full whirl of the passions and controversies of the second century.

This writing of John is therefore a book of contrasts, of seeming contradictions. It combines a narrative, at times intensely real and human, with a profound metaphysic. It is concerned at once with the eternal verities of religion and with the practical issues of a given age. It finds room within itself for the most diverse types of thought, Greek, Pauline, early Christian. It defends the orthodox faith of the Church, and at the same time borrows from Gnosticism. With its matchless simplicity of literary form, it is a complex work of art. With its dependence on previous thinkers, alike in its main ideas and in detail, it impresses us more than any other book by its absolute originality. These are only a few of the contrasts in this wonderful Gospel, which makes a different appeal to every variety of Christian temperament and experience. The mystic, the churchman, the philosopher, the man of simple thought and feeling, have

all responded alike to the teaching of John. He gave the chief impulse to the development of dogma; he has also acted, in every age of the Church, as the great liberalising influence in Christian thought. Finality is impossible in the interpretation of such a book. Each new attempt to explain it is fragmentary at the best, and sends us back to the Gospel itself with a deeper sense of its ultimate mystery.

CHAPTER II

SOURCES AND INFLUENCES

THE Gospel of John is the most individual of the New Testament writings. All the diverse elements of which it is composed have been fused together in the mind of an original thinker, and bear his unmistakable impress. At the same time, the Fourth Evangelist was not, like Paul, a creator and discoverer. He works with only a few ideas, which he is content to reiterate almost in the same words. These ideas have all been given to him, and it would be possible to go over his Gospel in detail and trace its dependence, almost in every verse, on the work of previous thinkers. His originality is one of attitude, of temperament. Through his own inward experience he has arrived at a new conception of the meaning of Christianity, and he assimilates the results of earlier thought to this conception. They enter into new combinations and assume new values; in every case they have something added to them which changes their whole character.

Our knowledge of the sources from which John drew affords us, therefore, only a partial clue to his thought, and is sometimes positively misleading.

The fact that some term employed by him bears a certain meaning in Paul or in Philo, may signify very little. By reading the original idea into the borrowed term, we often miss the shade of difference which now belongs to its essential import. It may fairly be argued that much of the modern research into the possible influences that have gone to the making of John's Gospel has served to obscure its real purpose and character. In face of the vast array of analogies and parallel passages, it becomes increasingly difficult to take the book by itself and allow it to create its own impression. This, when all is said, is the only true method of approaching a work of genius; and, while examining the debt owed by our evangelist to writers before him, we must always remember that our chief concern is with himself. What he borrowed was for the most part rude material; what he gave was spirit and life.

Three main influences are everywhere traceable in the Gospel,—the Synoptic tradition, the writings of Paul, the Alexandrian philosophy. To these may be added two contemporary influences,—those of the orthodox Church doctrine and of Gnostic speculation. One important question, however, falls to be considered at the outset. May we assume that, besides these known sources, the author drew from some other source now lost to us, in his representation of the life and words of Christ? By the nature of the case no certain answer can be given to this question. Granted that the Gospel was written in the first decade of

the second century, we can easily conceive that many authentic traditions of the life of Jesus were still extant. Men were living who had conversed with the Apostles, and we can hardly doubt that the Fourth Evangelist availed himself of their testimony. He would be at least as anxious as Papias "to inquire into the discourses of the elders, what Andrew or Peter said, or what Philip or what Thomas or James, or what John or Matthew or any other of the disciples of the Lord." In one memorable passage (xix. 35) he appears to make emphatic allusion to evidence received directly from an eye-witness; and in other cases not so carefully specified we may believe that he drew from authentic records, written or unwritten, which find no place in the Synoptics. At the same time, there is no ground for assuming that these other records were more than fragmentary. They may have supplied him with isolated sayings or incidents, but cannot be proved to have constituted a positive independent source. The theory of an original document underlying our present Gospel has recently been defended with vast learning and ingenuity by Wendt. This critic maintains that the discourses of Jesus, practically in the form in which we have them, were contained in an early Apostolic work, which was redacted by the later evangelist and thrown into an ordered narrative. The argument, however, makes shipwreck on two insuperable difficulties. In the first place, the Gospel as it stands is an organic unity and cannot be broken up into discourses and narrative, sub-

stance and framework; the impression of a single mind and a single hand rests upon every line of it, and a twofold authorship is simply inconceivable. Again, the portions assigned by Wendt to the original document are pervaded, like the rest of the book, with Pauline and Alexandrian influences. The source would thus offer exactly the same problems as the Gospel does, and would compel us to the same conclusions in regard to its date and authorship and intention. On these two grounds alone it seems impossible to accept any such theory as that which has been elaborated by Wendt. It may be freely admitted that John had access to many genuine fragments of Apostolic tradition, and embodied them in his work. Facts and incidents, touches of local colour, here and there a saying that bears the true accent of Jesus, may thus have been given him; but the large features of his picture, the general conception of the Lord's life and message, cannot with any probability be assigned to a primitive record now lost. We are thrown back on the assumption that the sources still accessible to us are the chief, and practically the only, sources from which the Gospel is derived.

Among these the first place must undoubtedly be given to the Synoptics. John would appear to have possessed these Gospels in much the same form as we have them now, and draws freely upon them all. There is little trace of critical discrimination in his use of them. It may be said generally

that for the sequence of events he gives the preference to Mark, for separate details to Matthew, while in his larger view of the significance of Christ's life and work he is most in sympathy with Luke. In the main, however, he uses the three Gospels as a single authoritative source.

The dependence on the Synoptics is naturally most apparent in the narrative portion of John's work. He sets before us the same general picture of Jesus as a teacher, a worker of miracles, a Master surrounded by disciples who only half understood Him. The conception of the character of Jesus, heightened though it is by the dominant idea of the Logos, is yet essentially the same as in the earlier evangelists. These large features of resemblance do not necessarily imply a direct borrowing, but there are further similarities which cannot otherwise be explained.

In the first place, the main divisions under which the Synoptic narrative unfolds itself are carefully imitated by John. The ministry of Jesus is preceded by that of the Baptist. The beginning of miracles takes place in Galilee, under conditions of gladness and bright promise; then follows a period of debate, ever more embittered as time goes on, corresponding to the strife with scribes and Pharisees in the Synoptics. The confession of Peter (vi. 69) answers to the scene at Cæsarea Philippi, and, like it, marks the turning-point in the story. In the closing sections of the book the Synoptic order is closely followed, although at

every step its details are skilfully adapted to the Johannine scheme.

The evangelist thus keeps himself in line with a sequence of events which in his own reading of the history had lost all its real significance. Jesus, as he conceived Him, came forth at once as the declared Messiah; His course was not shaped for Him by outward circumstances; He knew the end from the beginning, and ordered it according to His own will. But in this new reading of the divine life John had to reckon with the tradition already fixed by the written documents. He accepts the fundamental frame-work which they afforded him, and fills it in after his own manner, so that the original lines of the history are largely obliterated. The Galilæan ministry, with its brightness and hopefulness, is summed up in the opening miracle at the wedding-feast, and then gives place to the more conspicuous work at Jerusalem. The controversy with scribes and Pharisees on definite matters of the moral and religious life becomes a theological polemic against "the Jews." Peter's confession loses its true significance as the first acknowledgment of Jesus as the Messiah. This, in John's view, had never been open to doubt, and the confession only marks the growing faith of the disciples in contrast to the growing unbelief of the world. So in each case the broad Synoptic divisions are adapted to new purposes, though at the same time they are recognised. The evangelist seeks to base himself as far as possible on the foundations already laid

down. He reproduces, feature by feature, the history which was familiar to all Christian readers, while he presents it under a different light, so as to bring out more clearly its inward meaning.

In the details of the narrative, no less than in its general sequence, we can distinctly trace the Synoptic ground-work. The incidents are, with a few exceptions, taken over from the earlier evangelists with characteristic Johannine differences. We can easily identify the original sources of the story of John the Baptist, the cleansing of the Temple, the healing of the nobleman's son, the feeding of the five thousand, the walking on the sea, the anointing at Bethany, the entry into Jerusalem, the main episodes of the Passion and Resurrection. In all these parallels we have traces of a literary dependence which make it certain that the writer was borrowing from our present Synoptic Gospels. It is noticeable, however, that he never fails to modify in some fashion the material given him, sometimes changing its whole character. Compare, for instance, the account of the believing centurion with that of the nobleman whose son was healed. Apart from minor changes, —all of them introduced with evident intention— the purpose of the incident is altered. In the Synoptics the one prominent feature is the faith of the centurion, which secures an immediate answer to his prayer. In John the emphasis is all laid on the greatness of the miracle. Jesus performs it, not at the call of faith, but in order to evoke faith, complaining at the same time that men

cannot be persuaded except by signs and wonders. Thus, while he borrows the Synoptic story, John completely changes its meaning; and in the other instances he follows a similar method. Setting out from his own conception of the life of Christ, he adapts and modifies his originals, while still, in the main, adhering to them.

A more complicated question presents itself when we pass from these direct borrowings to certain other episodes in the Gospel which cannot be traced so immediately to Synoptic sources. How did John obtain his knowledge of the marriage at Cana, the second testimony of the Baptist, the meeting with Nicodemus and with the Samaritan woman, the healing of the paralytic at Bethesda and of the man born blind, the raising of Lazarus? The presence of these episodes might seem to prove conclusively that the Fourth Gospel embodies an independent tradition. Certainly it is possible, as has been indicated above, that John had sources of information, oral or written, apart from our present Synoptics. Such an incident as the meeting with the Samaritan woman may easily be supposed to rest on some actual fact which the evangelist took over from tradition and elaborated in his own characteristic manner. So, in regard to all the instances given, we are free to assume that he worked on lingering reminiscences that had come down from the Apostolic times. But, in view of his close dependence elsewhere on the Synoptic records, we have to admit the probability that here also he is drawing upon them, though not so directly

and apparently. As a matter of fact, when we examine these peculiarly Johannine incidents with some attention, we are rarely at a loss to connect them with parallel incidents in the earlier Gospels. Nicodemus has his counterpart in the rich young ruler who inquired of Jesus concerning eternal life. The miracle at Cana, obviously symbolic in its character, may well have been suggested by the two sayings of Jesus (Mark ii. 19, 22) about the children of the bride-chamber and the new wine. The second testimony of John seems to correspond with his sending of the embassy from prison; only the witness, instead of wavering, reiterates his faith. The paralytic of Bethesda reminds us of the man who "took up his bed and walked" at Capernaum, and the man born blind of the blind Bartimæus. Possibly the story of Lazarus is likewise to be explained by the working up of different Synoptic suggestions into a single narrative. As it stands. we cannot, with any show of probability, find room for it in an intelligible scheme of the life of Christ. It is inconceivable that a miracle of such magnitude, performed on the very eve of the last momentous week of our Lord's life, and in presence of crowds of people in a suburb of Jerusalem,—a miracle, moreover, which was the immediate cause, according to John, of the Crucifixion,—should have been simply passed over by the other evangelists. We are almost compelled to the conclusion that the narrative is in the main symbolical, gathering up under the form of "earthly things" the supreme doctrine of Christ the Life-giver. At the same

time it is woven together out of scattered hints supplied by the Synoptics,—the raising of Jairus' daughter and the youth of Nain, the Lucan account of the two sisters Martha and Mary, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, with its significant closing words, "Neither will they believe though one be raised from the dead." In no other instance does the evangelist depart so daringly from the historical tradition, yet he bases throughout on Synoptic reminiscences. He deals with them freely, and so combines and rearranges them as to form an entirely new narrative, but all the while he is careful to build with material given him. This is in accordance with his whole method and intention. He does not aim at writing a new life of Christ, but at re-stating the traditional facts in the light of what he regards as their inward meaning. The material is all borrowed from sources already familiar, and only the "truth," the higher spiritual interpretation, is new.

When we pass from the narrative to the discourses, which form the larger and more important section of the Gospel, we can still trace a continual dependence on the Synoptic records. Here, however, it is almost wholly a question of indirect influence. Two or three isolated sayings are taken literally from the Synoptics, but for the most part Jesus speaks in a language that seems entirely different. He no longer uses parables, or studies to express Himself in the simplest, directest words. His favourite mode of utterance is in dark sentences, which are often capable of several mean-

ings and are not intended to be fully understood. In substance even more than in form the Johannine discourses appear to stand in complete contrast to the Synoptic teaching. The message of the kingdom of God is barely alluded to, and in place of it Jesus is occupied almost exclusively with the doctrine of His own Person. In view of the marked differences, it seems hard to establish any connection between John's account of our Lord's teaching and that of the other evangelists; the discourses are either the product of free invention, or they are based on an independent tradition now lost to us. But there is a third alternative which commends itself on closer examination as the most probable. In the discourses, as in the narrative, John draws from the Synoptics; but he uses his sources freely, expanding, compressing, changing the emphasis, re-stating the actual words to bring out more fully the inward idea. There are few Johannine utterances to which we cannot find some parallel in the other Gospels. The resemblance may not be immediately apparent, and is often little more than a vague echo, but in almost every case the thought is derivable from some authentic saying of Christ preserved in our Synoptics. Examples might easily be multiplied, but we need only refer to one, which illustrates in a very striking manner the evangelist's method. The doctrine of the New Birth as set forth in the dialogue with Nicodemus is peculiar to the Fourth Gospel, and can be traced back to a variety of sources. Ideas that had grown up around the Mysteries are blended

in the mind of John with Pauline reminiscences, with theological reflections on the meaning of the Church rite of Baptism. Thus far the whole passage may be explained as a later addition, which has little to do with the recorded teaching of Jesus. Nevertheless the ultimate suggestion of the doctrine may be discovered in the earlier Gospels. The answer to Nicodemus: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," takes us back to the familiar verse, "Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." In both sayings we have the same essential thought of a new life taking its departure from an entire break with the past. In both, likewise, the image is primarily the same. John has merely developed in its full implication the idea of "becoming like a little child," and sought to interpret it in line with his own conception. Most of the passages in which he appears at first sight to vary most widely from the other evangelists, might be analysed in similar fashion with a like result. Working as he does in a spirit of freedom, he yet draws throughout from the Synoptic sources. To him, as to us, those earliest records of the words of Christ were authoritative, and he is careful to use them as his ground-work, while at the same time he modifies and interprets them.

It may be granted that in the separate discourses John avails himself thus of suggestions given him by the Synoptic records; but how are we to explain his new presentation of the whole tenor and context of our Lord's teaching? In the Sermon

on the Mount and the Parables the Speaker says little about His own Person. All the stress is laid on the moral truths to which He bore witness, and on God's kingdom and Fatherhood. In the Fourth Gospel the revelation of Jesus centres wholly upon Himself. His actions and words alike have no other purpose than to assert the worth of His Person, and to compel belief in Him as the Son of God. This change in the whole subject of the Gospel message marks the most serious difference between John and the Synoptics; but here also he is simply interpreting his sources, with a true insight into their real import. Jesus, indeed, says little in the earlier Gospels about Himself. None the less we are made to feel in every sentence that the authority of the Person is behind the teaching. His "Verily I say" is the ultimate sanction of each new commandment; His own life and character give meaning to His revelation of God. His words are recorded, not so much for their own sake as for the knowledge they afford us of His mind and spirit. He Himself in His living Person was infinitely more than His message, and it was a message of truth and power because He spoke it. Thus the chief purpose of the Synoptic writers is to reproduce in some faint measure the impression which Christ Himself made on men; and in the Fourth Gospel this underlying purpose becomes explicit. Jesus is not only the messenger, but is Himself the subject of the message. Instead of proclaiming the kingdom and witnessing to God's love and providence, He dwells on the significance

of His own Person. "I am the Light of the world." "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." These sayings, and a hundred others like them, have no direct parallels in the Synoptic Gospels, but they express the latent intention of those Gospels. Jesus revealed the Father, and opened up the way to eternal life, by the manifestation of Himself.

Thus far we have sought to prove that John works on the material given him by the earlier evangelists. His dependence on their record is so marked and constant, that we are the more struck by his omission of certain elements in it which are evidently of the first importance. He tells us, indeed, that he does not propose to write a complete life of Christ, but only to select the incidents that fit in with his practical religious aim. This accounts for the omission of many minor incidents; but it does not explain why a whole series of episodes, cardinal to the Synoptic story, is simply passed over. Nothing is said, for instance, about the genealogy and the Virgin Birth, the Baptism, the Temptation, the Transfiguration, the institution of the Supper, the agony in Gethsemane, the Ascension. Although the discourses of Jesus occupy the larger part of the Gospel, it contains not a single parable (the so-called parables of the Good Shepherd and the True Vine being pure allegories, which have nothing in common with the Synoptic parables). These remarkable omissions, which alter the whole character of the history, cannot be due to oversight or to the leav-

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ing out of what was non-essential. Without doubt they have been made deliberately, in view of certain theories and pre-suppositions with which the writer approached his subject. Indeed, in most of the instances it is not difficult to read the intention that was in his mind. His conception of Jesus as the Son of God did not admit of the apparent humbling of Him to human level, implied in the Baptism or the Temptation or the Agony. The scene of the Transfiguration became unnecessary, since Jesus was invested always with a divine glory, which shone out, not once by a special miracle, but in all His words and actions. The Virgin Birth was replaced by the doctrine of the incarnation of the Word; before His birth in time Christ was the eternal Son of God, and came into the world as man by His own voluntary act. The Ascension disappears from the narrative for a similar reason. Jesus had never ceased to be the eternal Son, and required no special act of exaltation to restore Him to His place with the Father. In all these instances the divergence from the Synoptics is immediately due to the influence of the Logos idea; the discarded elements either conflicted with that idea, or seemed to fall beneath it, or served a theological interest which it already supplied. The omission of the parables and of the institution of the Supper must be accounted for on other grounds. The question of the Supper, which is peculiarly difficult and complicated, will be examined later. With regard to the parables, the evangelist himself indicates the reason why he passed them over.

He apparently shared the view, of which we have traces in the Synoptic writers themselves, that they were intended by Jesus to veil His true teaching. They were addressed to the unthinking multitude, "that seeing they might not perceive, and hearing they might not understand;" and John wrote his Gospel in order to disclose the "truth" which Jesus Himself had half indicated and half concealed. "These things have I spoken unto you in parables, but the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in parables, but I shall show you plainly of the Father" (xvi. 25).

In its omissions, then, as much as in its correspondences, the Fourth Gospel can be understood only by the light of the Synoptics. What John contributes is his new conception of the inward meaning of Christ's message. So long as the material given him can be harmonised with this conception, he accepts it, while at the same time re-moulding it freely. When he discards any important element in the Synoptic record, his reason invariably is that it will not blend with his own theological view. It is noticeable, also, that even when he omits, he shows a desire to conserve at least some vestige of the original tradition. The scene of Gethsemane could not be related without doing violence to the Logos hypothesis, yet there is a faint reminiscence of it (xii. 27–29) when Jesus trembles for a moment on the verge of His week of Passion. Here we can trace, however dimly, the several details of the Agony, in the trouble of Jesus under the shadow of death, His prayer, His

submission to God's will, the divine help that strengthens Him. So the Ascension, although not recorded, is darkly alluded to in the words of the risen Christ to Mary (xx. 17). It would be possible to illustrate in like manner how the missing elements in the story are all replaced by something equivalent,—as when the prologue is substituted for the account of the miraculous birth, or the frequent allusions to Christ's manifest "glory" for the single scene of the Transfiguration. Throughout his Gospel the evangelist bases himself, consciously and deliberately, on the Synoptic writers. He accepts their narrative as the authentic record of the life of Jesus, and endeavours to keep in line with it even when it cannot be wholly reconciled with his own conception. At the same time he is more concerned with the "truth" of the original narrative, with its inward drift and significance, than with its literal content. "Having observed," says Clement of Alexandria, "that the bodily things had been exhibited in the other Gospels, John, inspired by the Spirit, produced a spiritual Gospel." This earliest criticism reveals a true insight into the purpose and method of John. He takes over from the Synoptic record the "bodily things," the actual facts of the Christian history, and makes it his special task to supply the interpretation. The Spirit guided him into all truth, yet the Spirit did not speak of Himself, but took of the things of Christ, as they were treasured in the familiar story, and unfolded them in their deeper meaning.

II. A second influence, only less powerful than that of the Synoptic tradition has left its impress on the Gospel. Nearly half a century had passed since the death of Paul, and the mind of the Church had become impregnated with Pauline ideas. More especially in Ephesus, which had been one of the chief centres of the Apostle's activity, the theological development had followed the lines marked out by him. Much, indeed, that was primary in the Pauline system had now fallen into the background. The Church had long since broken with Judaism, and the controversy concerning the relations of Law and Gospel possessed a merely historical interest. With this change in the outward situation the key to Paul's theology had been in great measure lost. Moreover, the Christianity of Paul was so much the product of his individual mind and experience, that it could not pass in its entirety into the common life of the Church. It was gradually broken up into its various component elements, which were thrown into new combinations and invested with new values. All this must be borne in mind as we approach the question of the Pauline influence on the Fourth Gospel. The evangelist is everywhere indebted to Paul, yet we are not to look for any literal reproduction of the Pauline theology. Some of the Apostle's main conceptions are passed over or barely recognised; others are so blended with foreign ideas as to lose their original meaning; in all cases there is something added or discarded.

According to an ingenious conjecture, which

has found acceptance with several recent critics, Paul is actually introduced into the Gospel under the figure of Nathanael. This mysterious disciple, who is nowhere mentioned in the Synoptic narratives, and whose call is yet described with peculiar fulness and solemnity, has always been one of the riddles of the book. It is impossible to identify him with any of the familiar Twelve, and we must regard him either as a purely ideal figure or as the symbolical counterpart of a real personage. If the latter alternative is adopted, there seems to be no other than Paul, who fulfils all the conditions. He was not of the Twelve, and yet ranked with them in the Apostleship, and received his call from Christ Himself. Like Nathanael, he was the last to enter the Apostolic band,—"as one born out of due time." He was at first adverse and contemptuous in his attitude, and was won over, not by the persuasion of the disciples, but by the immediate voice of Christ. "When thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee," describes in a graphic image his predestination to Christian service while still under the shadow of the Law. "Behold an Israelite indeed" suggests more than one passage of Paul's own writings, in which he speaks of the "true Israel," the "Jew who is one inwardly," the spiritual seed of Abraham. The great promise to Nathanael ("Thou shalt see heaven opened," etc.) finds its truest fulfilment in the career of Paul, who had moments of ecstatic vision when he was rapt up to the third heaven, while in his ever-deepening faith and spiritual insight he beheld the Son of

man, more and more clearly revealed to him. On all these grounds it may be considered at least possible that in the story of Nathanael the evangelist alludes symbolically to Paul, and claims for him his rightful place among the very chiefest of the Apostles.

Whatever be the worth of this conjecture, it is certain that John owes an incalculable debt to his great predecessor. In the course of the following chapters we shall have constant occasion to recognise his dependence on Pauline thought, and here it will be enough to touch more generally on the main points of contact. Reference may be made, in the first place, to particular verses and passages which appear to have been suggested by parallel sayings in the epistles. These reminiscences are for the most part vague and inconclusive, but here and there the Pauline original is unmistakeable. For example, the answer of Jesus (vi. 29): "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent," reminds us at once of Paul's teaching on faith and works; it may be said, indeed, to sum up the Pauline position in a sort of epigram. In another controversial passage (viii. 33–39) we meet with a whole series of ideas obviously derived from Paul. "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin;" "The servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the Son abideth for ever;" "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed;"—each of these sayings has its almost verbal parallel in the epistles (cf. Rom. vi. 16–23; Gal. iv. 30, v. 1). The claim of the Jews to special privilege in virtue of

their descent from Abraham is answered on the familiar lines of Pauline polemic. So the later verse (viii. 56), "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day," repeats, with an added touch of Johannine mysticism, the idea of Paul that the new dispensation of faith was implicit in the promise made to Abraham.

Such instances of separate Pauline thoughts reappearing in the Gospel might easily be multiplied; but we pass to a much more important manifestation of the influence. For almost all his larger doctrines the evangelist is indebted, more or less immediately, to Paul. The nature and extent of the borrowing will concern us more particularly, when we come to examine his teaching on the several aspects of the Saviour's work, and on Life, the Holy Spirit, union with Christ, the Lord's Return to His people. The doctrines that fall to be included under these heads are cardinal to the Gospel, and in each case the main conception is either derived from Paul or is combined with distinctively Pauline ideas. In some respects the Johannine theology may be considered as little more than the natural development, along one particular line, of Paulinism; although here again we must keep in view the essential originality of the later thinker. He deals with Paul as we have already found him dealing with the Synoptics. He seeks to penetrate through the outward form of the Apostle's teaching to what appeals to him as its real and abiding import, and in so doing he profoundly modifies the Pauline ideas. Even when he seems to borrow most directly, his thought is

never that of Paul, but something individual and new.

But apart from special doctrines, John is influenced by Paul in his whole attitude to the Christian revelation. It was Paul who first conceived of the glorified Christ as the real object of faith. The Lord whom he knew was the ascended Lord, who had been revealed to him, not in the intercourse of friend with friend, but in an inward spiritual experience. He claimed that this knowledge was as valid as that of the actual disciples, and even more real and intimate. John accepts this Pauline view with all its implications. To him also Jesus has become a heavenly being, whose life on earth had been only the beginning of an endless life, in which He is still present to those who believe in Him and love Him. In two directions, however, the Fourth Gospel advances on the thought of Paul.

In the first place, the divine glory of Jesus is expressed under a yet higher category. Paul speaks of Jesus constantly as the Son of God, but the name as he uses it does not possess a definite theological value. It is partly associated with apocalyptic ideas of the Messiah, and partly runs back to a purely religious judgment on the relation of Christ to God. Paul nowhere attempts to define that relation. He is content to think of Christ vaguely as a higher being, "the Man from Heaven," who had taken on Himself the form of a servant, and was now declared to be the Son of God with power. In the Fourth Gospel Jesus is the Son of God in a

strict and literal sense. He is identified with the Logos who was with God from the beginning, and partakes of the attributes and the essential nature of God.

Again, the glory which Paul ascribes to the exalted Christ is thrown back by John on the actual life on earth. When the Apostle wrote, the historical figure of Jesus was still too near, too much entangled with petty realities, to disclose itself in its full majesty. It was difficult for those who had known Christ after the flesh to think of Him as a divine being, and Paul turned his eyes from the earthly appearance to the ascended Lord, whose glory had now become manifest. In the second century, however, the life of Jesus had receded into the past. The veil of trivial circumstance had fallen away, and the life could stand out in its true proportions, as an authentic revelation of God. It was now possible to reflect the ideal conception of Jesus on the facts of His earthly history. The Lord who revealed Himself to Paul in the experience of faith is to the evangelist one with Jesus Christ, who had lived and taught and suffered. Even then, while He still dwelt among us, "we beheld His glory as of the only-begotten of the Father."

The Fourth Gospel is thus built on foundations which had already been laid by Paul; but there are certain all-important differences between the two types of teaching. Three of the most significant may here be briefly indicated, although they will demand a closer attention in subsequent chapters. (1) The idea of Sin, which lies at the centre of all

Paul's thinking, is reduced to a subordinate place. Salvation is regarded in its positive aspect as the entrance into a higher life, and the need of a deliverance from sin hardly appears to be realised. (2) The death of Christ no longer occupies the position which is assigned to it by Paul. Apart from one or two allusions of quite secondary importance, the Pauline doctrine of an Atonement has disappeared. The emphasis is removed from the death of Christ to His coming in the flesh; and so far as the death is theologically interpreted the theory of Paul gives place to another and wholly different one. (3) The word "faith"—the keyword of Paul's theology—is absent from the Gospel. Instead of it we have a continual repetition of the verb "believe" in all its various forms; but this believing has little in common with the Pauline "faith." In itself it only signifies an intellectual assent, and has to be filled out and supplemented before it can be made to connote the larger meaning.

These are the salient differences between the theology of Paul and that of John, and to some extent, doubtless, they are capable of reconciliation. The evangelist does not insist on the explicit Pauline doctrines, because he presents them, in what he considers their essential purport, under other forms. The death of Christ, to take no other example, sums up for Paul the whole result and character of the Saviour's life. He isolates the one crowning act as the revelation of the divine love; while John takes account of the whole life and dis-

covers in it the same significance as Paul had ascribed to the Cross. But the difference can only be reconciled in part. We have to admit that John's development of Paulinism resulted in a new type of doctrine, new in substance as well as in outward form. The divergence was due in great measure to the changed conditions under which the Gospel was written. Paulinism could not be set free from what appeared its temporary and accidental elements without a loss of many things that belonged to its very essence. Much more, the difference between the two thinkers arose from a personal difference, in temperament and in religious experience. In his relation to his great predecessor we have perhaps the most striking evidence of the originality of John in his interpretation of the Christian message. Working throughout under the Pauline influence, he never allows himself to be mastered by it, but subordinates whatever is given him to his own conception of the truth.

III. We have now to consider a third influence which is all-pervasive in the Fourth Gospel. From an early time the Pauline tradition, more especially in the region of Ephesus, was crossed with the Alexandrian philosophy. The book of Acts (xviii. 24) tells of Apollos, "a Jew born at Alexandria,' who came to Ephesus and spoke and taught the things of the Lord. All the allusions to him appear to mark him out as an adept in the allegorical method of Philo, which he pressed into the service of the Christian mission. The fact, however, of an

early intersection of Paulinism and Alexandrianism is placed beyond doubt by the presence of certain books in the New Testament, most notably the Epistle to the Hebrews, and, to a less degree, the Epistles to Ephesians and Colossians. In the first of these writings we find a thorough-going application of the method of Philo, together with some of his most characteristic phrases and ideas. In the two others his grand conception of the Logos, though not expressly mentioned, is clearly indicated and transferred to the Person of Christ. The main theology of these two epistles is strongly Pauline, and is not modified in any vital respect by the new conception; but none the less it is apparent that Paulinism has definitely allied itself with the philosophy of Alexandria.

The development which had thus begun in Paul's lifetime, or in any case shortly after his death, comes to its full maturity in the Fourth Gospel. The prologue consists of a succinct statement of the Philonic doctrine of the Logos, which is forthwith identified with Jesus Christ. And although the term "Logos" as applied to Christ does not occur again, the idea is everywhere present, as the inseparable co-efficient to every portion of the history. The evangelist has set himself consciously to re-write the life of Christ from the point of view afforded him by Philo's doctrine. He seeks to apply in its whole extent, and to work out into all its bearings and issues, the idea which previous Christian thinkers had only adopted partially.

At the same time it is easy to exaggerate the influence of Alexandria on Johannine thought. The attempt has been made by more than one recent writer to explain the Gospel wholly as an Alexandrian work, and the influence of Philo has been discovered, not only in the central conception, but in almost every idea and sentence. To such a view it may be objected that there are at least two other influences, quite distinct from the Alexandrian, which contribute, as we have seen, to the making of the Gospel. Its dependence on the Synoptics and Paul is everywhere apparent, and when the largest allowance is made for all other influences, these two must still be regarded as primary. Again, we have found that in his employment of New Testament sources John works in a spirit of freedom. He borrows continually, but adapts whatever he borrows to his own purposes. We naturally expect that his attitude to the Alexandrian sources will be of similar character. He will not simply reproduce, but will select and modify and interpret, assigning a new value to each idea that he seems to borrow. There can be little doubt that this has indeed been his method. It may be granted (for this appears to be more than probable) that he had some direct acquaintance with the works of Philo, and frequently draws from them, but it does not follow that his thought is dependent, in more than a very partial sense, on that of Philo. The borrowed ideas have all become different, and sometimes essentially so, in the process of transference. Once more, the attempt to resolve the Gospel into a mere echo or

adaptation of Philonism, breaks down when we compare the two theologies in their wider context and purpose. It is easy to single out a number of detached passages from Philo and set them side by side with passages in John to which they bear a strong resemblance. Turn, however, to Philo as a whole. His work is a dreary chaos, in which science, metaphysic, history, philology, moral reflection are all heaped together without plan or motive. The underlying ideas of his system have to be disengaged from a huge bulk of heterogeneous material, and are still obscure in spite of the labours of many able expositors. The contrast between Philo's rambling allegory and the Fourth Gospel is infinitely more striking than the occasional likeness. Something, no doubt, is borrowed, as certain parts of the Sermon on the Mount are borrowed from the Rabbinical teaching. But in the one case as in the other, we have always to lay the chief emphasis on what has been omitted.

The dependence of John on Philo appears mainly in three directions: (1) In the use of the allegorical method; (2) In special passages, scattered up and down the Gospel, which can be paralleled from the writings of Philo; (3) In the dominant conception of the Logos.

(1) It can hardly be questioned that the allegorical character of the Gospel is due to Alexandrian influence. In their effort to discover Greek philosophy in the Old Testament, the Alexandrian thinkers were driven to adopt a new system of exposition, whereby the letter of Scripture became

indicative of a deeper sense. Allegory had indeed long been employed in the Rabbinical schools for the explanation of certain difficult texts, but in Alexandria it was accepted as the sole method of interpretation. The Bible history was nothing but a series of symbolical images, in which, to the enlightened mind, a higher esoteric teaching was shadowed forth. Persons became the types of spiritual qualities, incidents were figurative of the various phases in the life of the soul ; places, names, numbers had all a mystical import. By the help of this method, applied in a perfectly arbitrary manner, Philo transforms the book of Genesis into an elaborate statement of his Hellenised theology. In the Fourth Gospel, likewise, outward facts are symbolical of an inward spiritual meaning. The events of the history have all a deeper reference. The persons described (Nicodemus, Thomas, Philip, the Beloved Disciple) are not so much individuals as religious types. Places (*e.g.* Bethesda, Siloam), numbers, dates have all their secret significance. In view of this pervading use of the allegorical method, it has been maintained by some critics that John simply deals with the Synoptic narrative as Philo dealt with the Old Testament. The historical record dissolves under his touch into a pure allegory, in which the apparent fact is nothing but a symbol or parable. This, however, is to overlook the obvious differences between the evangelist's method and that of Philo. It is noticeable, in the first place, that John's use of allegory is never merely arbitrary ; the higher meaning is not forced into the symbol,

but grows out of it naturally and inevitably. The feeding of the five thousand leads of its own accord to the great discourse in which Jesus declares Himself the bread of life. The miracle at Cana reveals its symbolic meaning with perfect transparency. So in every part of the history the spiritual significance, as John seeks to unfold it, is the real interpretation of the facts. Again (and this is the crucial difference), the material fact has no value to Philo except as a dim suggestion of some abstract idea. The history is allegorical to him in the strict sense,—an adumbration under sensible forms of higher realities. John, on the other hand, attaches a supreme importance to the fact. The Gospel rests on the grand assumption that the Word has become flesh, the higher truth has embodied itself in the actual life of humanity; and this assumption involves at every point a profound departure from Alexandrian modes of thought. The whole interest of Philo is to break away from the material symbol and resolve it entirely into its ideal meaning, while John is concerned for the fact as much as for the idea. He seeks to show how the spiritual things have become concrete realities in the historical appearance and work of Jesus Christ.

(2) The Gospel contains a number of passages in which we can trace coincidences, more or less close, with passages in the Philonic writings. It is possible, by a little ingenuity, to multiply these parallels almost indefinitely. In the vast extent of Philo's work there are necessarily many scattered sentences which offer a certain resemblance to

Johannine sayings; and this is the more unavoidable, as the Logos conception is the same, generally speaking, in both writers, and cannot be set forth without many analogies in thought and language. For example, when Philo describes the Logos as "eternal,"[1] "uniting all things,"[2] "incapable of evil,"[3] "imparting joy and peace,"[4] we need not infer that the corresponding Johannine ideas are immediately derived from him. Even when he speaks of the Logos under definite images as "leader on the way,"[5] "shepherd,"[6] "sustenance of the soul,"[7] "well of fair deeds,"[8] "healer,"[9] "high-priest,"[10] we are still within the region of natural coincidence. These images may well have offered themselves independently to both writers as the simplest and most expressive. They are part of the common religious language of all times. By far the greater number of the parallels to John which may be collected out of the Alexandrian writings may be set aside, in like manner, as at least inconclusive. There are passages in the Gospel, however, which seem to point to a definite reminiscence. One striking instance is the defence of Jesus for His breaking of the Sabbath—"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (v. 17). Here we have a thought which is several times insisted on by Philo,[11] that God never ceases the work of creation which He accomplishes through the agency of the

[1] *Conf. lingu.* 11. [2] *Qu. rer. div.* 38. [3] *Prof.* 21.
[4] *Somn.* ii. 37. [5] *Migr. Abr.* 31. [6] *Agric.* 12.
[7] *Leg. alleg.* iii. 59. [8] *Poster. Caini*, 37. [9] *Leg. alleg.* iii.
[10] *Somn.* i. 37. [11] *Leg. alleg.* i. 7; i. 3.

Logos. This Philonic idea takes the place of the simple Synoptic argument that "it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day." Again, the saying (v. 19), "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but only what He sees the Father do," has an almost literal equivalent in Philo: "The Father of the universe has brought Him [the Logos] into being as His eldest Son, whom elsewhere He calls His first-born; and He who was begotten, imitating the ways of His Father, and looking to His archetypal patterns, kept forming the separate species."[1] A resemblance like this, in which the thought and the image are both so peculiar, can hardly be explained on any theory of chance. A third parallel, in some respects the most notable of all, is found in the great discourse on the bread of life in the sixth chapter. Philo in several places dwells on the significance of the manna, and in each instance his thought anticipates that of John. "The Logos distributes to all the heavenly food of the soul, which is called manna."[2] "You see, then, what the food of the soul consists in,—in the Word of God, given continually like the dew."[3] "They who have inquired what it is that nourishes the soul, have found it to be the Word of God and divine wisdom, from which all kinds of instruction and wisdom for ever flow. This is the heavenly food, and it is indicated in the sacred Scriptures, where the cause of all things says, Behold, I rain on you bread from heaven."[4] The Johannine discourse appears to bear distinct traces

[1] *Conf. lingu.* 14.
[2] *Qu. rer. div.* 39.
[3] *Leg. alleg.* iii. 59.
[4] *Profug.* 25.

of the idea expressed in these and similar passages, that the Logos is the true manna, the bread from heaven, the food of the soul. At the same time we can observe in this typical instance how the Philonic thought changes its character. In the first place it is brought into relation with a peculiar order of ideas suggested by the Lord's Supper. Then the "nourishment of the soul" is understood mystically and religiously;—it does not consist merely in "all kinds of wisdom and instruction," but in a real communication of the divine life. Lastly, the whole force of the Johannine argument depends on the identification of the Logos with Jesus Christ. He, as He reveals Himself in the gospel history and in the inward Christian experience, is "the bread of life." The one condition of true life is to enter into personal union with Him, to incorporate, as it were, His spirit and nature into our own. It might be demonstrated in the same manner, that there is always an essential difference between John's thought and that of Philo, even when the apparent resemblance is closest.

(3) The Alexandrian influence is most evident in the Logos doctrine, which is expressly formulated in the prologue, and everywhere pre-supposed in the body of the Gospel. John does not, however, adopt the Philonic doctrine without subjecting it to certain profound modifications, which will be discussed in their due place in a later chapter. For the present it need only be indicated that the purely philosophical conception of Philo assumes an entirely new value when it is brought into relation

with the historical Person of Christ. It has indeed been argued that Philo also conceived of his Logos as a personal being, and his language in many places might seem to bear out this contention. Admitting, however, that he ascribes a real, and not merely a figurative, personality to the Logos, it still remains certain that he keeps within the limits of abstract speculation. He is thinking all the while of the divine reason and activity, which he personifies as the intermediate agent between God and the world. John, on the other hand, starts from an actual knowledge of the earthly life of Jesus, and the conception of the Logos is always blended in his mind with the impression left on him by the Person. Even in the prologue, when he speaks of the pre-existent Word in language purely Alexandrian, he looks forward to the subsequent revelation, when this Word became flesh. For this reason alone it is impossible to regard the Logos of the Fourth Gospel as merely equivalent to that of Philo. John accepts the Alexandrian idea, and is largely determined by it in his treatment of the history, but the history likewise re-acts on the idea. The speculative view of Christ's Person merges itself at every point in the simple religious view.

To sum up, the influence of Alexandrianism in the Gospel is a real influence which must constantly be borne in mind. The evangelist had passed through the discipline of the Alexandrian school, had learned its methods and assimilated many of its ideas,—above all its central idea of the Logos. Nevertheless the Alexandrian influence is not to be

recognised as primary, like that of the Synoptics or Paul. It does not affect the substance of the Johannine thought so much as the forms under which it is presented. The task of the Fourth Evangelist, it must be remembered, was somewhat similar to that attempted by Philo. Like the Alexandrian thinker, he sought to transplant into the world of Hellenic culture a revelation originally given through Judaism. By this similarity of aim he was constrained to follow, up to a certain point, the path marked out by Philo. He availed himself of the method of allegory as a means of penetrating through the facts to their deeper import. He expressed the Christian message in terms of the metaphysical conception of the Logos. The form in which his thought is embodied has thus been given him by Philo, and the thought itself is necessarily moulded, in some measure, by the form. But the vital and permanent elements in the Gospel are quite apart from the Alexandrian influence. They are derived immediately from the Christian tradition, as interpreted by the writer's inward and personal experience of the truth of Christ.

Thus far we have sought to determine the relation of the Fourth Evangelist to his three main sources—the Synoptic narratives, Paulinism, Alexandrian philosophy. The problem is a comparatively simple one, since in each case he availed himself of certain written documents which are still preserved to us. With regard to the two remaining influences, —the orthodox Church doctrine and Gnostic specu-

lation,—which have left their impress on the thought of the Gospel, the question is much more complicated. In order to arrive at some approximate conclusion, it will be necessary, in the two following chapters, to examine the book more closely in its bearing on the particular religious interests of its age.

CHAPTER III

POLEMICAL AIMS

THE writings which compose the New Testament had their origin in the immediate practical needs of the early Church. They were called forth by the exigencies of the mission, by the attacks of adversaries, by the conflict with different forms of false teaching. The Epistles of Paul are typical in this respect of all the New Testament books. Paul's object in the first instance was not to shape out a Christian theology for all time, but to defend his claims to Apostleship and the authenticity of his message, when these had been called in question. His permanent contribution to religious thought was thrown out almost incidentally in the course of a controversy which in itself had little more than a temporary interest. The other books arose in a similar manner out of some given historical situation. They were not the work of professed theologians, but of active leaders and missionaries, whose first concern was with the difficulties and the practical requirements of their own age.

It might seem at first sight as if the contemporary element which thus bulks so largely in

the writings would lessen their enduring value. Addressed as they were to a particular time in view of its special interests, how can they possess the absolute significance which we commonly ascribe to them? Especially in the case of the Fourth Gospel we are apt to shrink from the suggestion of mere controversial aim. This writing, above all others, seems to breathe the timeless spirit —to detach itself completely from the petty antagonisms of its own day, and to set forth the Christian message in its eternal aspects. Nothing, however, is gained by thus isolating the Gospel from the age in which it was written. The power of the New Testament writings is due in large measure to the very fact that they grew directly out of the life of the Church in a given time and in given circumstances. They show us Christianity in movement; responding to present needs, adapting itself to real conditions, re-acting on definite forms of opposition. The message they convey is pressed home to the life of the age, and is therefore invested with a new reality and with a fuller meaning and power. The Fourth Gospel loses nothing of its abiding value when we cease to regard it as an abstract meditation and endeavour to relate it to its own particular time. It becomes, on the contrary, a living book, and makes a closer and more intelligible appeal to us.

From the analogy, then, of the other New Testament writings we are prepared to discover a controversial interest present in the Gospel. The first age of the Church was necessarily one of

conflict. There were enemies without and alien forces working from within, and the Church could not establish its positive teaching without at the same time replying to the different forms of error. In the Epistles of Paul the polemical issue is clear and simple. The great struggle was in progress between Christianity, as something new and independent, and the old religion of the Law; and the whole thought of Paul is connected, more or less directly, with this struggle. The controversial issue in the Fourth Gospel is much more difficult to determine. In the first place, the evangelist writes under severe restrictions, imposed on him by the narrative form in which his work is cast. He is recording the life of Jesus, which had been lived a century before, under conditions entirely different from those of his own time, and if he deals with contemporary debates it can only be indirectly, by way of implication and covert allusion. Again, our information regarding the Johannine age is obscure and fragmentary. Except for a few scanty historical notices, we have to feel our way to a knowledge of the time and of the questions that agitated it by the help of the Gospel itself. The key to John's polemic is thus to a great extent lost. Its general direction can be inferred with some degree of certainty, but the precise bearing of much of the argument must always remain doubtful. Once more, the controversy is no longer limited to a single issue, as in the case of Paul's Epistles. A generation had passed, during which the Church had widened its boundaries and come face to face

with many new problems. Where Paul had to deal with one sharply defined form of opposition, the evangelist was called on to confront attacks at different points over an extended line. There appear to be several polemical intentions in his work, and they cannot easily be brought into relation with one another. It is hard to determine which of them is central, or whether they are all intended to rank equally in importance.

In regard to the main question, there can be little doubt that the Gospel is largely controversial in its character. Whole chapters consist of elaborate dialectic, in which the objections and misunderstandings of various opponents are carefully answered. Comparison with the Synoptics at once makes it evident that the criticism thus dealt with is different in kind from that which Jesus encountered in His lifetime. The writer is carrying back into the Gospel period the discussions of his own age. He is thinking not of the actual opposition which scribes and Pharisees offered to Jesus, but of the attacks directed in the present against the Christian Church. It was only natural in any case that the evangelist should adapt the history, as far as might be, to the conditions of a later time. Even if he had intended to write a literal record of the words and actions of Jesus, he would be led to lay a special emphasis on those which seemed to bear on present difficulties, and would unconsciously modify his account of them. The Synoptic writers themselves, faithful as they are to the essential facts, have composed their narratives

with a well-marked contemporary bias; and this was the more unavoidable in a work written many years later, for a circle of readers to whom the circumstances of the Gospel history were entirely foreign.

The evangelist, however, has not merely coloured the past events by the unconscious reflection of the present. He has deliberately taken the changed conditions into account, so that his work throughout has a double bearing on the actual life of Jesus and on the life of the Church in the second century. This, indeed, is part of the general intention with which his book is written. In the historical figure of Jesus he seeks to adumbrate the eternal Christ, who is still present with His people, sharing their warfare, revealing Himself under ever-changing aspects. The Gospel is so composed that the earlier time and the later are always merging in one another. Jesus speaks in His earthly life as He is speaking now in the consciousness of the Christian Church.

In one significant passage the double intention is expressly indicated: "Verily I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness" (iii. 11.). Here the words of Jesus pass insensibly into a declaration by the Christian community. Unless the change of person is due to forgetfulness (which is hardly possible in a work so elaborately finished), the writer desires to suggest that the Jesus of the past is still speaking through the voice of His Church. This inference is more than borne out by

a detailed study of the Gospel. In several distinct directions it is a work of second-century controversy, and can be explained only on this hypothesis. The Church in the name of Jesus, and under the guidance of His Spirit, formulates its answer to certain groups of opponents who can still, at least in a general way, be identified.

I. There is one controversial purpose which is written large in almost every chapter of the Gospel. "The Jews" come forward constantly as the chief adversaries of Jesus,—not any sect or party of them, but simply "the Jews." This vagueness in the description might be partly explained by the fading of the historical perspective. After the lapse of a hundred years, the particular assailants of Jesus might well have been forgotten, and only the large fact have stood out clear that His own countrymen had opposed Him and compassed His death. Not only, however, are the different sects confounded in the one hostile party of "the Jews," but the opposition to Jesus assumes quite another character from that which is pourtrayed, in self-authenticating colours, by the Synoptics. The controversy no longer turns on our Lord's attitude to the Law or the theocratic hopes. His denunciations of pride, hypocrisy, self-righteousness, worldliness, are never mentioned. Even the question of His Messiahship falls into the background, lost sight of in His claim to a yet higher dignity. The objections urged against Him by the Jews are all of a kind

which suggests a later age, when the broad lines of Christian theology had been definitely laid down. "He makes Himself equal with God." "Can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" "Art Thou greater than our father Abraham?" "We were never in bondage to any man, and how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" These sayings, and many others like them, take us into the thick of the conflict which arose afterwards when Judaism and Christianity confronted each other as powerful rivals. They echo the objections that were continually urged in the course of that struggle. Christianity seemed to impugn the monotheistic idea by raising Jesus to an equality with God. It assailed the racial privileges of the Jews by its insistence on faith in Christ as the one condition of salvation. Above all, it came into collision with Judaism through its sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The conflict between Jesus and the Jews in the Fourth Gospel comes to a head in the great Eucharistic discussion (vi. 32–59), a discussion which was plainly impossible in our Lord's lifetime, before the sacrament was yet instituted. It belongs to a later age, when the Supper had become the central object of the Jewish attack on Christianity.

The real nature of the controversy is still more apparent when we take account of certain details which are made prominent in it. For example, we are struck repeatedly with the author's evident intention to defend the work of Jesus from possible misrepresentations. He is aware of various

objections which might be made, or have actually been made, to the facts of the Gospel history, and goes out of his way again and again in order to answer them. Thus he is careful to assert the *publicity* of our Lord's mission (vii. 4, xviii. 20), and subordinates the Galilæan teaching to the more conspicuous work in the capital. He shows that the rejection of a Messiah from Nazareth has its ground in an empty prejudice (i. 46, vii. 52). He lays emphasis on Pilate's declaration that he cannot condemn Jesus as a malefactor (xix. 4). He is manifestly perplexed by the episode of Judas Iscariot. Why did one of the Lord's own followers betray Him, and how could the All-Knowing One admit the traitor into His company of disciples? The twofold difficulty is met, on the one hand, by assigning the action of Judas to a direct impulse from Satan (xiii. 27), and, on the other hand, by the bold theory that Jesus foreknew and permitted the betrayal (vi. 64, xiii. 11). A like solution is given to the problem of the comparative failure of the Lord's appeal during His lifetime; this result also was foreseen and even designed. The evangelist notices in passing even the more trivial criticisms to which the Person and work of Christ seem liable. "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" (vii. 15). "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?" (vii. 48). "Hath not the scripture said that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem?" (vii. 42). The supreme difficulty of the Cross is fully recognised, and the effort to

overcome it leads to the peculiar Johannine view of the death of Christ as a self-determined act, necessary to His entrance into glory.

The criticism which he pre-supposes, in these instances and many others that might be adduced, is all of one well-marked character. It turns on difficulties that would present themselves most readily to Jewish opponents of Christianity. The wider Gentile world was content to offer a general hostility to the new religion, and did not trouble to inquire too curiously into its origin. The Jews alone were in a position to attempt any detailed criticism. They were acquainted with the facts of the life of Jesus, and had been discussing them in schools and Synagogues ever since the claims of this new Messiah had first been pressed on them. The objections touched upon in the Fourth Gospel were precisely those on which Jewish malignity would fasten; many of them re-appear in the Talmudic writings and in the work of Celsus, who derived his more specific arguments from Jewish sources. Thus it was urged that the Messiah of the Christians was an unlettered man from an obscure village. His claims were at variance with the clear indications of Old Testament prophecy. His supposed miracles were performed in a remote province among an ignorant, easily deluded peasantry. He made no impression during His lifetime, and if He attracted a few followers it was only from the credulous multitude. One of His own disciples was so doubtful of Him as eventually to betray Him; and

He Himself, who laid claim to supernatural knowledge, had chosen the traitor to be of His company. He was condemned as an evil-doer, not only by the Sanhedrim, but by the Roman judge, who was presumably impartial. These were the stock arguments of the Jewish opposition, and they betray their Jewish origin alike by the detailed knowledge on which they are based and by the personal enmity to Jesus which inspires them. At the same time they are arguments due to later reflection, and could not have become current until a date long subsequent to our Lord's death. When we find them recognised in the Gospel, we can only conclude that in the evangelist's own age and neighbourhood there was a Jewish community which offered a powerful hostility to the Christian Church. The Gospel, at least in one of its aspects, is the Christian reply to this Jewish polemic.

Here, however, we are met with one of those apparent contradictions which form a peculiar difficulty in the study of this Gospel. The same writer who so pointedly dissociates himself from the Jews, and marks them as his special antagonists, appears at times to regard them with sympathy. "Behold, an Israelite indeed," is the high encomium passed upon Nathanael. In the dialogue with the woman of Samaria, Jesus identifies Himself with the Jews (iv. 22), and asserts the purity of their religion, as contrasted with that of alien peoples. Appeal is constantly made to Moses and the prophets, whose word is accepted as authoritative. "The mother of Jesus" would seem to represent

the ancient faith,—the "mother" that had given birth to Christianity,—and Jesus commends her, as He dies, to the care of His beloved disciple. How are we to explain this partiality for Judaism which appears side by side with the fierce polemic? It may be set down, in some measure, to the evangelist's natural sympathy with his own race breaking occasionally through the religious antagonism. That he was by birth a Jew is an almost certain inference, not only from his close acquaintance with the customs and localities of Palestine, but still more from the Hebraic cast of his language and his thinking. Steeped as he is in Greek culture, he is still in the essential character of his mind a Jew. But, apart from racial sympathies, he cannot forget that the two religions, in spite of their present alienation, are historically related and have much in common. The defence of Christianity involved, up to a certain point, the defence of Judaism, with which it was still vaguely confused in the mind of the outside world. And here probably we obtain a clue to the real drift of his polemic. He makes a distinction, already suggested by Paul, between the true community of Israel and the Jews as a religious party. What was valuable and permanent in Judaism has now passed over to Christianity: the "mother of Jesus" dwells in the house of His disciple. The Jews of the Synagogue are to be regarded only as an irresponsible sect which has broken off from the genuine stem of the covenant people. Their criticism of Christianity carries no weight, since they are not the repre-

sentatives of the old religion, but a mere outside party like any other.

This attitude of the evangelist may be illustrated by a striking verse in Revelation (ii. 9): "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, but are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan." The verse throws an important side-light on the conditions which prevailed in the very neighbourhood in which we may fairly assume that the Gospel was written. It informs us in so many words that a Jewish party existed and troubled the Church by its "blasphemies," its slanderous attacks on the rival religion. It indicates, further, that these attacks were met by a counter-attack. The Church denied that its assailants had any real title to the name of Jews on which they rested their authority. An almost literal parallel to the verse is found in the Fourth Gospel: "They said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. . . . Ye are of your father the devil" (viii. 39, 44).

We may thus conclude that the apparent sympathy with the Jews, which seems at first sight to neutralise the polemic, is a consistent part of it. The Synagogue spoke in the name of the mother-religion. It denounced the Church as an erring sect, which it had cast out from its communion, and for this reason more than any other the attack was dangerous. In a matter affecting Jewish religion the world accepted the judgment of the elder, legitimate representative. John endeavours,

therefore, to set the dispute upon a different footing. He argues that the Church is the true Israel, and that the Jews, despite their name, are the schismatic sect. By the rejection of Christ they have finally cut themselves off from the people of God. In other words, the attack which they directed against the Church is not only repelled by an elaborate answer to their criticisms, but is carried boldly into their own camp. They had been disloyal to the spirit of their professed religion, and had no further standing even as Jews. "Do not think," says Jesus, in the emphatic close of the great controversy in the fifth chapter, "that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me."

II. One of the most interesting and perplexing questions in Johannine criticism is concerned with the name of John the Baptist. It is apparent on the surface that the account of John and his mission which is presented in the Fourth Gospel is quite at variance with that given by the Synoptics. In the latter, John appears as the champion of a religious reformation, a preacher of repentance and good works. The character of his mission is entirely changed in the later Gospel. His office as there described is simply to bear witness to the light, and when once he has pointed out Jesus as the Christ he is content to disappear. The two most striking episodes in the Synoptic

account of John—his baptism of Jesus and his sending of the embassy from prison under a sudden access of doubt—are both omitted.

It is evident, also, that the evangelist writes with a deliberate intention to subordinate John to Jesus. Even the prologue is interrupted in order to emphasise the inferiority of the mere witness, to Him who was the light itself; and when John is introduced in his own person he hastens to make it clear that he is not the Christ. He encourages his disciples to exchange his service for that of the true Master. In his witness to Jesus he dwells on the contrast between himself and this higher Being "who cometh after me, but is preferred before me." As he disappears from the scene, he formally resigns his place to Jesus, repeating his testimony that he himself is not the Christ, but only the friend who stands by and hears the bridegroom's voice. The allusions to John, apart from his own utterances, are all of a like tenour. Jesus does not Himself baptize, as John did, but leaves that lower office to His disciples (iv. 2). John's light, however brilliant, was only "for a season" (v. 35). The people recognise that "John did no miracle, while all that he spake of this man was true" (x. 41). Thus the evangelist shows a constant anxiety to assure us of a fact which might have been taken for granted,—that John was inferior to Jesus. Indeed, it is not too much to say that John is introduced into the narrative for no other purpose than to bring out this fact of his inferiority. "I am not the Christ, but am sent

before Him. . . . He must increase, but I must decrease" (iii. 28, 30).

The intention of these many passages in which the figure of the Baptist is so carefully subordinated to that of Jesus, can scarcely admit of doubt. If the writer considers it necessary to prove that John was not the Christ, he must know of some who have claimed that dignity for him. Not only so, but he must regard the question with more than a historical interest. It may well have been that in the Baptist's own lifetime extravagant claims were put forward on his behalf; but if they had been abandoned after his death there was no need to disprove them by elaborate evidence. Since this is done in the Fourth Gospel, we can only infer that the relative positions of John and Jesus were still debated in the circles for which the Gospel was written, and that in his account of the person and work of the Baptist the writer is influenced by a direct polemical intention.

The clue to his attitude appears to be given us in certain notices contained in the book of Acts (xviii. 25, xix. 3, 4), which point to the existence of a Baptist party long after John's death. It is significant that Paul came into contact with this party during his visit to Ephesus, where our Gospel was in all probability written. The references in Acts are fragmentary, and would seem to suggest that after Paul's visit the belated followers of the Baptist were quietly incorporated into the Christian Church; but this can have happened only in part. A religious sect does not so easily give up its

separate existence, even though its more liberal spirits may see reason to detach themselves. It is much more likely that after the better minds of the Baptist party had been won over, a residue was left which took up an attitude of sharp opposition to the Church. This, indeed, is not a mere matter of inference. We have direct evidence in several later writings of the antagonism of a Baptist sect, presumably the same as that which Paul encountered at Ephesus. Specially interesting in their bearing on the argument of the Gospel are the references in the Clementine Recognitions (dating possibly from the first half of the third century): "Some even of the disciples of John, who seemed to be great ones, have separated themselves and proclaimed their own master as the Christ" (i. 54). "Then one of the disciples of John asserted that John was the Christ, and not Jesus, inasmuch as Jesus Himself declared that John was greater than all the prophets. . . . But John was indeed greater than all the prophets and all that are born of women, yet he is not greater than the Son of man. Accordingly Jesus is the Christ, whereas John is only a prophet" (i. 60). Here we have evidence not only of a Baptist party existing alongside of the Church, but of an active controversy with it, which was still in process at the beginning of the third century.

A motive may thus be discovered for the otherwise inexplicable attitude of the Fourth Evangelist. He was confronted in his own age and neighbourhood with a Baptist community, who alleged that

their master was the Christ, and supported his claims from the testimony of the Gospel records themselves. John had preceded Jesus, and had baptized Him as one of his own disciples. His pre-eminence had been fully acknowledged by Jesus in the saying that "none greater had been born of woman." His very name, "the Baptist," marked him out as the original founder of the sacred rite, which was held in ever-increasing reverence by the Christian Church. In the Fourth Gospel the Synoptic account is so modified as to deprive these and similar arguments of their apparent weight. John is nowhere called "the Baptist," and the inferior character of his "baptism by water" is constantly insisted on. The episode of the baptism of Jesus gives place to the recognition of Him by His forerunner as the Son of God. Even the precedence in time of John to Jesus is qualified by assigning to the later Messenger a timeless priority: "He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for He was before me" (i. 30). Above all, the whole significance of John is altered by the representation of him as simply a witness, whose office it was to lead men to the true Light.

The prominence given in the Gospel to this particular controversy is sufficient proof that the Baptist party was a serious element in the forces opposed to the Church. Since the time of Paul its strength had probably grown, rather than diminished. The increasing importance which the rite of baptism had assumed in the life of the Church would tell, we can hardly doubt, in favour

of this sect, which claimed to have inherited the rite from its real founder. There are indications, moreover, that the Baptist controversy is bound up with that larger Jewish one which has already been discussed. From the beginning the Jewish leaders had regarded John with a certain measure of sympathy, and his followers, if we can trust a somewhat obscure reference in Justin (*Trypho*, 80), took rank among the orthodox sects. But apart from this traditional alliance we can well believe that the Jews threw their weight on the side of the Baptist party in their opposition to the Church. Here was a powerful weapon laid ready to their hands. A sect existed, kindred in some respects to the Christians, which yet subordinated Jesus to a rival prophet, and made out that His work was secondary and derivative. For the purposes of their own polemic the Jews would take up the cause of John, and support his followers in their antagonism. This may partly account for the important place occupied in our Gospel by the Baptist controversy. Whatever may have been the actual strength of the sect which reverenced John as the Messiah, it afforded cover to the Jewish opposition, and for this reason, if for no other, was dangerous.

Thus far we have spoken of the evangelist's attitude as polemical, but it probably had another side. The Baptist party, though it had ranged itself against the Church, had many traditions in common with it, and might have been expected long before to join its fellowship. Already in the

days of Paul the baptism of John had led up to Christian baptism; and while the evangelist sets himself to refute the errors of the rival sect, he may well have cherished the intention of convincing it and winning it over to the Christian Church. It is very noticeable that he is never tempted in the passion of controversy to speak disparagingly of John. The extravagant claims put forward for him by others are firmly set aside, but in such a manner as to vindicate more surely than ever his essential greatness. He is not the light, but remains the chief witness to the light. His very admission of his own inferiority is invested with a splendid moral grandeur, so that we honour him the more for his self-abasement. This reverence paid to John throughout the Gospel cannot be wholly accounted for by the demands of the historical tradition, but belongs, we may well conjecture, to the writer's deliberate plan. While opposing the Baptist party, he wished to persuade and gain them, and for this reason joined with them, as far as might be, in honour to their great prophet. The intention becomes still more apparent in the passages which describe how certain of John's disciples exchanged his service for that of Jesus. It is suggested that John himself desired and encouraged them to make the exchange;—he had only been preparing them, in order that they might find their way eventually into the higher fellowship. The story of those early disciples of John would convey a practical meaning to the later community, which was wavering between the Jewish alliance

and the Christian Church. Its true path had been indicated for it long ago by the prophet himself, when he bore witness of Jesus to his followers, and bade them enter the higher service.

The Baptist controversy is thus different in character from the larger controversy with the Jews, although to some extent they are involved together. The evangelist's attitude to the Synagogue is one of open hostility. Paul, when he broke with the old religion, was conciliatory towards it, and looked forward to a time when Israel also would be gathered in; but in the intervening years the breach had become irreparable. The Church had cast in its lot definitely with the Gentiles, and had learned to regard the Jews as declared enemies, with whom no peace was possible. The Baptists, on the other hand, were a kindred sect, and had already supplied many converts to the Church. Their prophet John was a consecrated figure in Christian history, although the excessive claims that had been advanced for him could not for a moment be conceded. It was necessary to combat the Baptist position, all the more that it lent support to Jewish antagonism, but the polemical note required a certain softening. There was always the possibility that these present opponents might be reconciled, and the evangelist is careful to say nothing that will embitter them. Combined with the controversial aim, we can always trace the positive one of reasoning with these half-brethren, and leading them from John to Christ.

In any case, it does not appear that the Baptist

controversy is more than a subordinate motive in the Gospel. It comes prominently forward only in the first chapter, and after the third passes wholly out of sight, except for a few chance references. This alone would seem to be sufficient answer to the view of Baldensperger, that the Gospel was primarily intended as a polemic against the followers of John. Baldensperger rests his main argument on the prologue, with its singular transitions from the pre-existent Logos to the "man sent from God." In these verses, which present the thesis of the ensuing Gospel, we have a series of deliberate contrasts between the supreme worth of Jesus and the inferior dignity of John. Once and again the sublime account of the eternal Word is suddenly interrupted by a reference, apparently needless, to him who was only a witness.

It is possible, however, to explain the difficulty without assuming that the polemical purpose, thus suggested at the outset, is cardinal to the whole work. In the first place, the introduction of John into the heart of the prologue serves to connect the historical narrative with the theological doctrine of the Logos. The evangelist had no intention of dividing the prologue sharply from the body of the Gospel, but desired, on the contrary, to bring it into close relation to it, so that the earthly history of the Logos might run back without a break into the pre-existent life. Properly speaking, there is no separate "prologue." The Gospel is a unity from first to last, and this fact is emphasised by the sudden and apparently incongruous transitions

to John. What would otherwise be a theological preface becomes an integral part of the Gospel narrative. Again, we have seen that the evangelist, while re-moulding his material freely, endeavours to keep himself in line as far as possible with the Synoptic record. In that record the baptism by John marks the moment when the divine Sonship of Jesus is rendered manifest by the descent of the Spirit upon Him. The Fourth Gospel says nothing of the Baptism, and takes for granted that Jesus was from the beginning the acknowledged Son of God, but the Synoptic tradition still lingers in the writer's mind. As he speaks of the incarnation, his thoughts pass at once to John, with whose ministry the descent of the Spirit on Jesus was popularly associated. Viewed in this light, the abrupt references lose much of their seeming incongruity.

The singular structure of the prologue is thus capable of a natural explanation, and cannot bear the weight of Baldensperger's argument. No doubt the first allusions to John, like the later ones, are tinged with a polemical intention. The evangelist is careful from the outset to leave no shadow of a question as to the relative dignity of John and Jesus. But the references in the prologue do not bear wholly on the Baptist controversy. There, as afterwards, it is only a subordinate motive, and the real issues of the Gospel lie quite outside of it.

III. It may be assumed, then, with a fair degree of certainty, that in two distinct directions

the Gospel is a controversial work. Little as we know about the situation of the Church in the early part of the second century, we have sufficient evidence of long-continued disputes with the Jews and with the Baptist party, and when we turn to the Fourth Gospel we find these differences clearly reflected. A more difficult question arises with regard to the evangelist's attitude towards the internal controversies of the Church. Ever since apostolic times, certain tendencies had been at work which threatened to disintegrate the primitive faith, and had become more and more apparent as the Church acclimatised itself in the Gentile world and yielded insensibly to extra-Christian influences. Already in several of the New Testament writings a strong opposition is offered to these dangerous tendencies, and the controversy becomes ever more violent in the works of the later Apologists. Towards the end of the second century the battle between the orthodox faith and Gnosticism is the one dominant interest in the life of the Church. It may reasonably be expected that the Fourth Gospel will have some bearing on the great controversy, which had not yet reached its head, but had already passed its earliest stages.

There is one significant fact which lends weight to this presumption. The New Testament writings that stand in the closest relation to our Gospel are precisely those in which we have the best marked allusions to early phases of Gnosticism. The Book of Revelation, different as it is from the Gospel in its whole scope and character, originated almost

certainly in the same region of Asia Minor, under similar conditions. It appears from several passages in this book that the Asian Church was imperilled by false teachers within its borders ("that woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess," "Balaam," "the Nicolaitanes"), and the errors attributed to these heretics have striking parallels among Gnostic sects in later times. One of the technical phrases of Gnosticism is easily discernible in the scornful reference to "the depths of Satan, as they say" (ii. 24). The Epistle to Colossians is the connecting link between the Pauline writings and the Fourth Gospel; in several of its leading conceptions it approaches even more nearly to the Johannine type of thought than the sister Epistle to Ephesians. The immediate purpose of Colossians is to warn the Church against certain heresies which are plainly of a Gnostic character. In Christ, the writer insists, "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (ii. 3); "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (ii. 9). Such verses are directed against a form of Gnosticism in which the outstanding features of the later development have already declared themselves in more than outline. The most important evidence, however, is that of the First Epistle of John, a writing which cannot with any certainty be assigned to the author of our Gospel, but which bears the impress of the same school of thought, and is meant to unfold and emphasise the same message. This Epistle, like that to the Colossians, conveys a warning against heretical teachers, the nature of

whose doctrine is indicated with some detail. They deny that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh; they disbelieve in the reality of His death; they claim to have known Him although they do not keep His commandments (1 John i. 2, 3, ii. 22, iv. 3, i. 6 f., v. 5). From this description it can be inferred that they belonged to a docetic sect, representing the type of opinion which was afterwards to culminate in Gnosticism. The author of the Epistle replies to them by insisting on the supreme value of the historical revelation, and his argument throughout is in striking accordance with that of the Fourth Evangelist.

We thus discover that the writings which stand nearest to the Gospel have all a reference to a special mode of heresy, broadly definable as incipient Gnosticism. In the Gospel itself there is no express mention of any such heresy, but we have abundant evidence, of an indirect nature, that it was constantly present to the writer's mind. He touches repeatedly on the dominant ideas of Gnosticism, and even makes use of some of its characteristic words. Not only so, but his thought in more than one of its cardinal aspects can only be explained when we set it in relation to the Gnostic movement. Here, however, we are confronted with a serious problem, which affects the very substance of the Gospel. Was it written, like the Epistle, as a polemic against the rising heresy, or must we regard it rather as itself a product of the Gnostic type of Christianity? Towards the close of the second century there were already two

opposite views concerning it—one that it contains John's answer to Cerinthus, the other that Cerinthus himself was its author. Irenaeus quotes from it repeatedly in his controversy with the Gnostics, while he informs us at the same time that it was the favourite Gospel of the Gnostic schools. In nothing is the contradictory character of the book more apparent than in this double relation to Gnosticism, which was recognised in ancient times and still constitutes the chief crux in the many-sided Johannine problem. Before attempting to arrive at some decision, it will be necessary to consider the two sides of the relation separately. What evidence does the Gospel afford on the one hand of antagonism, on the other of approximation, to the Gnostic mode of thought?

(1) The affinity between the Gospel and the Epistle makes it probable at the outset that a similar purpose underlies both writings. Both of them follow out the same general line of argument; they are alike in their strong affirmation of the reality of Christ's appearance, in their demand for ethical obedience as well as knowledge, in their employment of the three great categories, life, light, love. It seems a reasonable inference that since the Epistle was written in refutation of a given type of false teaching, the Gospel, so closely parallel to it, has a like intention. Many of the most remarkable features of the Gospel assume a new meaning when we read it in the light of the Epistle, and trace in it the same controversial interest. We can understand, for instance, why the evangelist lays

such peculiar stress on physical details which prove the reality of Christ's life, and especially of His death (*e.g.* the print of the nails, the spear wound, the allusions to thirst, weariness, etc.). Like the writer of the Epistle, he is answering those who would deny that Christ came in the flesh, and regard His seeming death as an illusion. In this connection we may read a special significance in the omission of all reference to Simon of Cyrene, who, according to one well-known Gnostic legend, was crucified in place of Jesus. He not only disappears from the story, but we are assured with a marked emphasis, that "Jesus went forth, bearing the cross for Himself" (*βαστάζων ἑαυτῷ τὸν σταυρόν*). Apart from questions of detail, the very fact that the work takes the form of a Gospel, a record of the actual life of Christ, indicates very plainly that the author set a supreme value on that life, once visibly lived in the flesh. His desire to affirm its value may well have been due in some measure to the existence of a school of thought which denied the earthly life or resolved it into an unreal appearance.

In several other respects the Gospel runs counter to the chief Gnostic positions, apparently with deliberate intention. The hierarchy of spiritual agencies, which plays an all-essential part in Gnosticism, entirely disappears. The whole book is like an amplification of the saying in Colossians, that "all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Christ." The "angels" of popular belief, which are often alluded to in the Synoptics, are absent from the Fourth Gospel, and still more remarkable

is the suppression of all reference to evil spirits. It seems to be a paramount object with the evangelist to disown the whole machinery of intermediate spiritual beings on which the Gnostic doctrine rested. Indeed, he expressly does this in the emphatic words of the prologue, "And without Him was not anything made that was made." The multitude of aeons which mediated the creative activity of the supreme God in the Gnostic mythologies, is here at the outset swept away.

Not less striking is the opposition to Gnosticism involved in John's attitude towards the Old Testament. The heretical doctrine that the God of the Old Testament was a lower God, and that the ancient revelation was worthless, is altogether wanting in the Gospel. It is pre-supposed, without the shadow of a question, that the Father of Jesus Christ was the God of Israel. Abraham, Moses, and the prophets are always mentioned with reverence, and their witness accepted as true. In spite of his controversy with the Jews, the evangelist, as we have seen, pays homage to the old religion. It was the only religion hitherto in which the truth had partially revealed itself, and which was fitted therefore to be the "mother" of Christianity. "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews" (iv. 22).

Again, there is a marked divergence from Gnosticism in the position laid down in the prologue and uniformly enforced throughout the Gospel: "To them gave He power to become the

sons of God." Divine sonship is not an inherent quality of certain natures, as was maintained in the Gnostic doctrine, but is only made possible by the work of Christ, who is the mediator of a new life. It is the more important to note this point of antagonism, as John appears in many places to concede the Gnostic theory of lower and higher natures. All that he grants, however, is the predisposition on the part of some men more than others, to hear the voice of Christ and embrace the light. On the main question his contention is directly the opposite of that which obtained in all the Gnostic systems.

Lastly, we cannot but be struck with the studied avoidance in the Gospel of certain Gnostic watchwords, even though the ideas expressed in them are constantly present. Three omissions in particular can hardly be explained as accidental. The evangelist more than any other writer in the New Testament dwells on ideas which would be conveyed most naturally by the words *γνῶσις*, *σοφία*, *πίστις*. Two of these words are always recurring under the verbal forms *γιγνώσκειν*, *πιστεύειν*, but the sentence is never constructed in such a manner as to admit the substantive. The third term *σοφία* is replaced by *ἀλήθεια*, a word which carries with it in the Johannine vocabulary a peculiar and technical meaning. There must be some reason for this pointed omission of the very terms on which the thought of the Gospel in large measure revolves; and it is connected, we can hardly doubt, with the appropriation of the terms by Gnostic theology.

The writer wishes to guard himself from any possible confusion of his teaching with that of the heretical systems. Where his thought approximates to them he is careful to mark the difference by the use of language which does not involve the full Gnostic connotation. A still more direct controversial purpose may possibly be discerned in the substitution of verbal equivalents for γνῶσις and πίστις. These words had acquired a definite Gnostic import from which they could hardly be dissociated, and the evangelist seeks to get back again to their simple root-meaning. Salvation, he seems to say, is not dependent on γνῶσις and πίστις in the Gnostic, esoteric sense, but on a real "knowing" and "believing."

(2) Against these evidences of an anti-Gnostic polemic running through the Gospel we can easily discover arguments which point to a different conclusion. The Epistle, it may be urged at the outset, affords no indubitable clue to the intention of the Gospel. The divergences in its teaching, all the more remarkable because of the general resemblance, are strong proof that it was written by a different author at a later date. It may be that this second writer misunderstood the drift of the evangelist's work, or even purposely employed his line of argument in a quite opposite interest. This is improbable, but the bare possibility makes the evidence of the Epistle insecure.

Turning then to the Gospel itself, we cannot but observe the absence of any pronounced condemnation of Gnostic heresy. Already at the date

of Colossians and the Apocalypse, the dangerous nature of the new speculations had been recognised, and towards the end of the second century no language is vehement enough to denounce them. If John's attitude, likewise, is one of opposition, we should expect him on this subject, above all others, to express himself decisively. He finds room within the historical limitations of his narrative to wage a sharp polemic with his Jewish adversaries, and he might just as easily have assailed the Gnostics in terms that could not be mistaken. But if he opposes them at all he contents himself with a few faint allusions, with a vague and general argument that still leaves his position doubtful. Apart, however, from this absence of any strongly marked polemic, we seem to distinguish everywhere in the Gospel traces of actual sympathy with the doctrines of Gnosticism.

In the first place, while the reality of Christ's earthly life is firmly insisted on, an equal emphasis is laid on its ideal value. The historical Jesus was also the Logos through whom the worlds were made, and His actions are all symbolical of great spiritual facts in the life of the Church and of the individual believer. Thus, in spite of its fundamental thesis that "the Word was made flesh," the Gospel itself bears a semi-docetic character. The actual Jesus passes continually into an ideal being, who was never truly visible except to the apprehension of faith. In the conception of the work of Christ, as well as in that of His Person, a Gnostic influence is distinctly traceable. Gnosticism,

in all its forms, centres on the idea of Redemption, viewed as a deliverance from the lower world of matter in which the human soul has become entangled. This deliverance is effected by the Saviour (σωτήρ in a specific sense) through His victory over the material forces, and is appropriated by γνῶσις, knowledge of the mysterious divine plan. The ethical moment is thus markedly absent; redemption is no longer related to sin, but only to the lower status of man's material life. John's doctrine of salvation is not to be confounded with this Gnostic one; but there are distinct points of contact in the falling away of the idea of sin, and in the opposition of the natural life to the higher spiritual life into which the believer is born again through Christ. The Gnostic view that the resurrection takes place here and now, when a man attains to the true "knowledge," has likewise a striking parallel in the Johannine doctrine. To John also the mere fact of physical death has little to do with the great change. "He that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me . . . is passed from death unto life" (v. 24).

The Gnostic theory of salvation rests on the grand antithesis of the two worlds—the lower and higher, the earthly and heavenly, the world of light and the world of darkness. This antithesis is accepted by John as the framework of his own thought. It appears more especially in his favourite opposition of "light" and "darkness," which occurs repeatedly in a definite theological sense, analogous to that which attaches to it in

the Gnostic thinkers. Reference has been made already to the kindred antithesis of the two classes of men—the earthly and the spiritual. We have seen that John refuses to accept this distinction in its full sense, and requires that all alike should "become sons of God" through the power given them by Christ. None the less, in a mitigated form the Gnostic doctrine of the two natures is constantly present to him, and exercises a decided influence, as we shall discover, on some important aspects of his teaching. The whole work of Christ, as he conceives it, is determined by this presupposition that certain elect natures have an inborn affinity to the light.

Gnosticism derived its name from that insistence on "knowledge" which was the dominant note in its teaching, and the question of John's relation to it must largely turn on the place he assigns to knowledge. We have observed already that he avoids the special term γνῶσις, out of a desire, most probably, to dissociate himself from the current Gnostic doctrine. "Knowledge" to him is not the initiation into a particular discipline, and is more even than a purely intellectual process. We shall find, in the course of our inquiry, that the Johannine "knowledge" includes certain spiritual and ethical elements which make it equivalent in some degree to the Pauline "faith." At the same time the fact is significant that John describes the supreme energy of the religious life as an act of "knowing": "This is life eternal to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ

whom Thou hast sent" (xvii. 3). The intellectual idea, combined though it is with the ethical and spiritual, is still present, and indeed determinative. A value is thus assigned to knowledge which affects in a vital manner the whole theology of the Gospel. The purely religious view is overlaid and obscured by the conception of Christianity as a speculative system, which makes its primary appeal to the logical intelligence. In this respect, more clearly than in any other, the evangelist's attitude to Gnosticism appears to be one of sympathy. He has been influenced, more or less directly, by the tendency to construe religion as a γνῶσις, a higher type of knowledge, which is revealed rather to the wise and prudent than to babes.

Such, in brief outline, is the antinomy that confronts us in the Fourth Gospel. On the one hand, there are fair grounds for argument that the first aim of the evangelist, as of the writer of the Epistle, was to counteract the heretical teaching. On the other hand, we seem led to conclude, on equally positive evidence, that he himself had accepted, at least partially, the chief principles of Gnosticism. How is the contradiction to be reconciled?

In the first place, it requires to be borne in mind that the cleavage between the orthodox faith and Gnosticism had not yet become so broad and decisive as we find it towards the close of the century. The references in Colossians and Revelation, hostile as they are, are directed against a party *within* the Church. The doctrine

that was afterwards to develop into the finished Gnostic systems was still a legitimate form of Christian opinion, and was maintained, we can well believe, by many who professed a more liberal faith and yet repudiated the charge of heresy. The evangelist, writing in those earlier days of the Gnostic movement, was able, without any sense of inner contradiction, to assume a double attitude towards it. He foresaw the possible dangers of the new teaching, but there were certain features in it with which he found himself in accord. Its relation to orthodox Christianity was still so undetermined, that he could accept the truth which it seemed to offer him while opposing its tendency as a whole. Such an attitude is not only possible but inevitable in a broad-minded thinker at a time of religious transition.

Again, the Gnostic movement was much more than a phase in the development of Christian doctrine. It had its ultimate ground in the general conditions of the world's thought and culture in the early centuries, when the alien religions of the East were seeking to fuse themselves with the intellectual life of the West. In all the philosophy and literature of the age we can trace ideas corresponding with those which found expression in the Gnostic systems. They belonged not to one peculiar drift of thought, but to the whole atmosphere in which all the thinkers lived and moved. Even the Apologists who set themselves in declared opposition to

Gnosticism are themselves touched with Gnostic modes of thinking. They do battle not so much with the inner spirit of the movement, as with the special fantastic forms in which it had embodied itself. The evangelist, writing in an earlier age, when the new ideas were not yet crystallised into system, could far less escape their influence. He fell into agreement at many points with the heretical teachers, not because he borrowed from them or inclined to their position, but because he drew, like them, from the common thought of the time.

Once more, the approximations to Gnosticism in the Fourth Gospel are in many respects more apparent than real. Starting from his own premises, and advancing on his own characteristic lines, John was led to conclusions which bear a superficial resemblance to those of the Gnostics, but on closer analysis are radically different. This is true, more especially, of his conception of the Person of Christ. We have seen that for all his insistence on the reality of the human life of Jesus, he presents it at the same time symbolically. Christ in His visible appearance seems to be resolved into a sort of type or adumbration of the ideal, eternal Christ. But this Johannine conception is different in its origin and nature from that of the docetic schools. John does not set out from a mythological speculation, but from a fact of Christian experience. Like Paul before him, he has known the fellowship of the living Christ, and reads the earthly history by the light of this

inward knowledge, so that it is all imbued with a spiritual meaning. Intrinsically there is nothing in common between the fanciful docetic view of the Person of Christ and the profound conception of the Fourth Gospel. In like manner, many of the seeming coincidences with Gnostic doctrine are only superficial and accidental. The evangelist is working out some thought of his own, altogether different from anything in Gnosticism, though he happens to express it under roughly analogous forms. And even when the affinities appear to be most real and obvious, we must be careful not to press them too closely. It cannot be too often repeated that this evangelist, open as he is to the many influences around him, is never merely a borrower. He informs whatever is given him with his own peculiar spirit; it ceases to be Pauline or Philonic or Gnostic, and becomes simply the thought of John.

We can thus appreciate in some measure the curious double relation in which the Gospel stands to the Gnostic movement. In so far as the relation is one of sympathy, it may be accounted for without concluding that John was himself in any true sense a Gnostic. He adopted ideas which belonged in the first instance to the common culture of the time, and were only identified afterwards with one prominent school. He was led by his own individual thinking to views that seem partly akin to Gnosticism, though in reality they have sprung from a different source. The conscious attitude of the evangelist, like that of the writer of the

Epistle, is antagonistic to the new movement. He stands for the historical tradition as against the attempts to dissolve it in a vague idealism. He gives prominence to the ethical demands of Christianity, which had been set aside by the intellectual pride of the Gnosticising teachers. At the same time, the opposition between the orthodox faith and Gnosticism was as yet too loosely defined to admit of a thorough-going polemic. A generation before, when the Epistle to Colossians was written, the foreign ideas had just begun to seek an entrance into Christianity, and their dangerous tendency was distinctly felt. A generation later, they had declared themselves so plainly in highly developed systems that the Church was compelled to put forth all its energy in order to uproot them. There was an age between, the age of our Gospel, when the first opposition had partly died down and the later struggle had not yet commenced. The Church had familiarised itself with the heretical ideas and admitted them to a certain hospitality; and the evangelist could employ them without misgiving wherever they seemed to him true and valuable. It is not improbable that he was influenced also by a practical motive,—that of regaining for the orthodox faith the more speculative minds which were gradually drifting apart from it. He may well have judged that mere antagonism to the prevailing errors would serve little purpose. What was needed was such a widening and deepening of the common faith that all the varieties of religious

temperament might find their home within the Church of Christ.

Much of the peculiar character of the Gospel is due to that strain of partial sympathy with Gnosticism which underlies its re-affirmation of the great facts of Christianity. Nor does this detract in any wise from its abiding truth and value. Gnosticism, though it spent itself at a later time in wild and futile imaginations, would never have arisen unless it had responded in some measure to an authentic longing in the human soul. In the following age it could only be condemned unreservedly as a heresy, and the truth in it had to be rejected along with the error. To maintain its own existence the Church had no choice but to close its doors against every form of the alien teaching, and so far to impoverish its faith. But all that was vital and enduring in Gnostic thought had already been absorbed, and was preserved to the future ages as an element in Christianity. Before the great conflict opened there was a period of truce, and it was then that John wrote his Gospel. In his criticism of the new movement he was still able to do justice to it, and to accept whatever it had to offer towards a larger interpretation of the truth.

CHAPTER IV

ECCLESIASTICAL AIMS

THE Fourth Gospel closes with a short epilogue, added apparently when the work was first made public after the writer's death. One purpose of this epilogue, however we may explain it otherwise, is undoubtedly to present the Gospel to the world with some kind of official sanction. A body of men who can speak with acknowledged authority set their imprimatur on "the witness of this disciple." The fact is highly important, indicating as it does that the Church from the first accepted the Gospel as a manifesto. The evangelist had not spoken merely in his own name, but had laid down once for all the principles of the common faith.

We have already seen that the polemic of the Gospel has a representative character. John identifies himself with the Church in its various antagonisms, taking for granted that he only defines the common Christian position. "We speak that which we know, and testify that which we have seen." It is a controversy of parties,—the Church against the Jews and the Baptists. The arguments of the Gospel carry weight because

they express the mind of the whole party, not simply that of the individual writer. In one respect, therefore, the judgment implied in the epilogue appears to be well founded. So far as it is a work of controversy, the Gospel was written deliberately in the name of the Church, and contains its authoritative reply to the criticisms of the hostile sects.

There is reason to believe, however, that in a wider and in a more intimate sense John wrote as representing the Church. It might seem at first sight as if no work could have less bearing on mere ecclesiastical interests than this "spiritual Gospel." We think of its author as a contemplative nature, withdrawn from the tumult of sects and parties, and wrapt up wholly in the inward devotional life. But there are many instances in history of mystical temperaments to which the idea of the Church, as an outward institution, appealed with singular power. The New Testament offers us one such instance in the writer to the Ephesians; and in the Fourth Evangelist, there can be little doubt, we have another. He never once mentions the Church by name, but his whole mind is penetrated with the thought of it. His work is one of our most important documents for tracing the development towards the idea of the Catholic Church.

The conception of a Christian brotherhood, scattered through many lands but spiritually one, is first set before us in the writings of Paul. It was the necessary outcome, on the one hand of his view of Christianity as a new and distinct religion,

on the other hand of his widespread missionary activity. He sought to inspire the different communities with a sense of their mutual obligations and their fellowship in the faith. He looked forward to a time when the Church throughout the world would be like one body, moved by the spirit of Christ. Much had happened in the generation since, to realise Paul's great conception. A common danger had served to draw the Christians closer together; the growing success of the mission had led to a more perfect organisation; even divergences of doctrine had helped the cause of unity by creating a need for some acknowledged standard. Right on from the age of the sub-Pauline writings the idea of the Church became a paramount interest in Christian theology.

There were two special causes which began to operate in full force towards the end of the first century, and hastened the development of the ecclesiastical idea. In the first place, the wave of enthusiasm on which Christianity had launched itself upon the world was now almost spent. The original Apostles had passed away, and the immediate power of the Spirit, which had been sufficient guidance to the primitive Church, was felt ever more rarely. In every great movement the first period of ardour, when the whole body regulates itself with the spontaneity of life, is followed by one in which law and institution must take the place of impulse. The Christian religion was now entering on this secondary period. If the results attained in the first age were to be con-

served, and the new ideal of life made possible for the future, there must be a fixed organisation, able to enforce what had hitherto come freely. From this time onward the Church becomes authoritative instead of the living Spirit. The mystical ideas which had attached themselves to the working of the Spirit became more and more identified with the conception of the outward Church. The other factor which began to operate powerfully about this time was the doctrine of the Sacraments. From the beginning, Baptism and the Supper had been the outward signs of communion with Christ, and already in the theology of Paul they are invested with a high religious value. But in a later time, partly in consequence of the growing externalism, partly through the influence of Greek mysteriology, they became the central interest in Christian devotion. The extravagant value set on the Sacraments reacted on the idea of the Church. It was regarded as much more than an outward institution. It was the steward of these divine mysteries, the intermediary between Christ and His people. Already before the end of the first century we can trace the clear beginnings of the conception of the Church as the visible kingdom of God, the seat of all spiritual authority, the mystical body outside of which there is no salvation.

The Fourth Gospel has come to us out of this age, in which the Church had become a dominant fact in Christian theology. Even if the evangelist had been a solitary thinker, such as we are wont to imagine him, he could hardly have remained

untouched by this all-pervading interest of his time. We have seen, however, that so far from standing aloof he claims to represent the Church in its controversy with hostile sects. His work is accepted by the Church leaders of the following generation as a true embodiment of their own belief. It is reasonable to infer that the doctrine of the Church, which filled such a large place in contemporary thought, is a matter of vital concern to him. He writes, indeed, under limitations imposed on him by the historical form of his work. If he deals with the later developments of the ecclesiastical idea, it can only be by way of implication and veiled allusion. Many of the details of his teaching are for this reason obscure, but we can still make out its general character and purpose.

In considering the place of the Church in the Fourth Gospel, our natural point of departure is the seventeenth chapter, the "intercessory prayer" after the Last Supper. This chapter marks the culmination of the life of Jesus, when He has finished the work given Him to do, and looks forward into the great future that will grow out of it. His work had consisted in imparting the revelation of God to the little band of disciples. They had at last been won to a triumphant belief, and Jesus sees in them the first fruits of a great multitude who will afterwards believe through their word. The prayer is thus the consecration of the Church, which already existed germinally in that knot of disciples.

They are solemnly set apart from "the world" and commended to the love and keeping of God. They are henceforth to be "one," in a mystical communion like that of the Father with the Son. They are to bear witness to the world, by their mutual fellowship and the presence of God among them, of the divine mission of Christ.

This chapter therefore refers, we may almost say explicitly, to the future Church; and its place at the very summit of the Gospel is worthy of attention. From the outset the story has centred on the selection by Jesus of a body of disciples. He draws to Himself out of the unbelieving world those who are able to receive His message, and their faith grows ever clearer as the world's hostility deepens. The relation of Christ to His disciples becomes more and more the one theme of the Gospel, and at last in the crowning chapter we learn who the disciples were. They were the beginning of the Church. They represented in miniature the great community that Christ would gather to Himself hereafter out of the world. A light is thus thrown back on the whole intention of the Gospel. It is the story of the upbuilding of the Church, —the formation of the elect company to which Christ had revealed Himself and imparted His gift of life.

This view of the Gospel is confirmed by the presence of certain episodes in which the later history of the Church is plainly shadowed forth. The evangelist, writing at a time when Christianity had become mainly a Gentile religion, was con-

fronted with the fact that Christ's own activity had been limited to the Jews. It was impossible to introduce any Gentile element into the elect body of the Twelve, and yet if the narrative was to anticipate in any adequate manner the formation of the Church, there needed to be some acknowledgment of the future mission to the Gentiles. This is effected by two remarkable passages, which connect the work of Christ with a wider circle of disciples. First, there is the incident of the visit to Samaria, resulting in the addition of many of the Samaritans to the company of believers. The story may well rest on some authentic record, but in view of the unity of purpose that runs through the Gospel we cannot suppose that the author introduced it as a mere detached episode. A reference is almost certainly implied to the first extension of the Christian Church beyond Jewish boundaries (Acts viii. 5, 6). The later mission to Samaria is prefigured, and at the same time justified; for it is on this soil, where the Church was first to take root among an alien people, that Jesus makes His great declaration of the universality of His religion. The Samaritan incident is placed at the beginning of Christ's ministry, and another of similar import comes at the very end (xii. 20). Though in itself apparently trivial, it is introduced with peculiar solemnity, as marking in some sense the consummation of the whole work of Christ. Certain Greeks at the feast desire to see Jesus, and the disciples, after anxious consultation with one another, bring them to the Master. He recognises this

meeting as the immediate sign of the end. His life has at last attained its purpose: "the hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified." Here the allusion is unmistakable to the Gentile mission in which Christianity was to achieve its permanent triumph. We are made to realise that this extension of His Church to the great Hellenic world was the ultimate object of Jesus in His work among His own people. That is the meaning of the emotion that thrills Him on His meeting with the Greeks. The goal towards which He has been moving is now in sight, and He can depart again into His glory.

The evangelist thus endeavours in his record of the life of Jesus to adumbrate the formation of the Church. The work of Christ, as he conceives it, was not only to reveal the truth but to build up a community to which the revelation should henceforth be entrusted. The disciples are the Church in its first institution. They are separated from the world and become partakers of the new life communicated through Christ. And though the community as yet is limited to this small inner circle of believers, there is a foreshadowing of the world-wide extension that was to follow. It was in the plan of Christ from the beginning that His Church should be thrown open to all the nations, and already He had Himself begun and sanctioned the great Gentile mission. "Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white even now unto harvest" (iv. 35).

There are thus two main conceptions in the idea of the Church as set before us in the Gospel. In the first place, this spiritual community which Christ Himself had originated is universal in its character. The time had passed when the admission of the Gentiles could be regarded as a debateable question. John sees clearly that the world-wide Church was involved in the very nature of Christianity, and had been contemplated from the outset by Jesus Himself. On the other hand, he insists on the separation between the Church and the world. The message of Christ does indeed appeal to all men, without distinction of race and class, but only a few are able to respond to it. They form a community by themselves, and have nothing in common with the unbelieving world round about them. It is necessary to look a little more closely at these two opposite sides of the Johannine conception.

First, the universal nature of Christianity is more fully recognised than in any other New Testament book. The principle which Paul had fought for is accepted by John in its widest compass, and determines his whole theology. Jesus is the Logos, the light that lighteth every man. His appeal throughout is to "the world," of which He is the Light, the Life, the Saviour, the True Bread. He has come to break down the old limitations and to inaugurate a spiritual worship in which all may join alike. He bears witness to a love of God that embraces the whole world (iii. 16). The idea of the Church as set before us in

the Gospel corresponds with this conception of Christianity as the absolute, universal religion. We have seen that in the episodes of the Samaritans and the Greeks the beginnings of the Gentile mission are traced back to the personal activity of Jesus. He intended from the first that all peoples should have entrance into the fellowship of believers. The great extension that had come about since His death was no new departure, forced on the Church after a violent struggle, but the natural fulfilment of the plan of Christ Himself. In several passages the thought which underlies these episodes is stated clearly and definitely. "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd" (x. 16). "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me" (xii. 32), where the emphasis rests on "all men," as contrasted with the few that had been drawn hitherto. So in the striking words of comment on the unconscious prophecy of Caiaphas: "And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together into one the children of God that were scattered abroad." It will be noticed that in these and similar passages the future extension of the Church is closely connected with the death of Christ. This, indeed, is one chief element in the Johannine theory of the death, that it was the appointed means of freeing the work of Christ from its necessary limitations and making it available for all the world. The theory is partly due to reflection on the actual course of the subsequent history, but it bears

witness in any case to the central importance attached by John to the idea of a universal Church. The purpose of Christ's coming was to found a community into which all men should have the right of entrance. He had died in order to fulfil this purpose, and bring into one fold, under one Shepherd, those who were scattered abroad.

This universalism, however, is combined with another strain of thought which serves in great measure to neutralise it. The Church is universal, in the sense that men of all nations and classes are drawn into it, but it is separated in the most emphatic manner from "the world." It might even appear at times as if John removed the old racial limitations in order to replace them by others of a more stringent character. He assumes that while the appeal of Christ is made to all men, only certain elect natures are predisposed to hear it and respond to it. Christ does not convert the sinful world, but sifts out from it "those who are of the truth," the "scattered children of God," and unites them within His Church. This apparent dualism in the Gospel has already been touched upon, and will require a fuller treatment in a later chapter. At present it is enough for our purpose to note the distinction which is everywhere presupposed between the Christian community and "the world." The work of Christ, as the evangelist conceives it, was to draw to Himself certain disciples out of the unbelieving mass and to consecrate them as a people apart,—different in aims and character and destiny from their fellow-men. They have

special ties binding them to each other in which the world claims no part. The revelation made to them is unintelligible to the world. They exist in the world, but are radically separate from it. The farewell discourses are based throughout on this conception of a chosen community which has broken with the life around it and is complete within itself. The world has now been judged, and Jesus is left alone with the little company of "His own." His promises and exhortations are addressed solely to them. He says expressly, "I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me." Even the new commandment of mutual love is laid on the disciples as members of the Christian community. Their love is not to be to all men, but only to one another, so that the world may know them, by their spirit of fellowship, to be the people of Christ.

The Fourth Gospel, which gives the grandest expression to the universalism of the Christian religion, is thus at the same time the most exclusive of the New Testament writings. It draws a sharp division between the Church of Christ and the outlying world, which is regarded as merely foreign and hostile. This exclusiveness is partly to be set down to the historical conditions under which the Gospel was written. A time had been when the Church had hopes of securing the protection of the Roman government, and its attitude to the world around it was one of conciliation and even of friendliness. Since the days of Paul, however, the secular power had declared itself, more

and more definitely, as hostile to Christianity. The Book of Revelation, written in the same neighbourhood, under the same outward conditions as our Gospel, reflects the feeling that had grown up in the Church under successive persecutions. It had come to be recognised that the world and Christ were enemies. The Church was driven back on itself and accepted the world's hostility as final and irremediable. Its obligations henceforth, its work of love and usefulness, were to find their limits within itself. The attitude of the Gospel may be partly accounted for by these historical conditions, but the true explanation lies deeper. For all his width and spirituality, John has accepted the ecclesiastical idea. He has learned to identify Christianity with the Church as an outward institution. Between this Church, to which the higher spiritual life has been imparted, and the surrounding world he sees a great gulf fixed. The "world" exists for him only as an outer darkness, with which he need not concern himself, since it has no part in the work and the promises of Christ. This attitude was doubtless accentuated by the prevailing hostility between the Church and the secular power, but it belongs to the inner substance of John's thought. He starts from the conception of the Church as the elect community of Christ, within which alone He can reveal Himself to men.

It is here that John makes his gravest departure from the actual message of Christ as we know it in the Synoptic Gospels. That message was in the fullest sense universal. It was addressed not so

much to those within the fold, to the just men who needed no repentance, as to the darkened world without. In the Fourth Gospel a whole side of the teaching of Jesus, and that the grandest and most characteristic, is left wholly out of sight. The "Saviour of the world" becomes in effect the Saviour of the Church. He lays down His life "for His friends;" He loves His own and prays for them, "not for the world" (xvii. 9). At the same time the peculiar power of John's Gospel is due in great measure to these very limitations. It forgets the wider aspects of the message of Christ, only to express with matchless depth and intensity His appeal to His own personal disciples. His love to "the world" has assumed a new meaning for all time, because John, within the limits of the Church idea, was able to realise so intimately His love for "His own."

We have thus discovered that the universalism of the Gospel is combined with a sharp-cut conception of the Church. Christianity makes a world-wide appeal only in the sense that men of all races are among the chosen disciples; Christ has His sheep in every fold. But the Church in which the scattered children of God are thus united is separate from the world, and has an organic life and character of its own. It is one of the main purposes of the Gospel to legislate for this new community. From the manifold confusion and error of his own time, the evangelist goes back to the original intention of Jesus. He seeks to determine the nature of the true Church as con-

stituted by the Lord Himself in His fellowship with the first disciples. In three directions we can trace this practical interest underlying the Gospel, and colouring its whole presentation of the life and teaching of Christ.

I. In the first place, John is concerned with the doctrinal basis on which the true Church must rest. It is a significant fact that the Fourth Gospel has contributed more powerfully than any other influence to the building up of the orthodox Christian dogma. The great Church councils, from Nicæa onward, worked on the lines laid down by John, and sought to formulate his doctrinal positions more fully and precisely. This choice of John as the master-theologian ("ὁ θεολόγος") was no mere matter of accident. His teaching lent itself as a basis for the common belief because it was designed by himself for that express purpose. Writing as the representative of the Church, he set himself deliberately to shape a theology on which the whole Church might agree. The outward organisation was to maintain its unity through the commonly accepted faith.

The Johannine theology in several of its aspects first becomes intelligible when we thus regard it as expressing the mind of the Church, not merely of the individual thinker. Reference has been made already to the frequent "concessions" to earlier types of doctrine. Again and again the characteristic ideas of the Gospel are blended with others which have simply been taken over from the

common belief without any real assimilation. They are part of the traditional Church doctrine, and the evangelist as a member of the Church accepts them. In like manner we can explain his manifest desire to keep himself in line with the current modes of belief even when in spirit he breaks away from them. He avails himself, as far as may be, of the existing elements of Christian thought, and works upon them by methods of allegory and reflection in order to make them capable of new meaning. His aim throughout is not to create a new theology, but to conserve and at the same time broaden and deepen that which he found already. His readers were to feel that the Church spoke through him, reiterating the witness of those who had been with Christ "from the beginning" (xv. 27). The position of John as a Church theologian may also account in some measure for the abstract dogmatic form in which he gives expression to the great Christian truths. He does not start like Paul, with facts of personal experience, but with *a priori* assumptions. He lays down certain doctrines which must be simply "believed" on an outward authority, and so made the foundation of the Christian life. There is indeed, as we shall see later, another side to his conception of Christianity, but in the first instance he presents it as a body of theological "belief" imposed on men from the outside. The idea of orthodoxy as the necessary condition of salvation has its roots in John; and the inference is a fair one that his work is intended, like later confessional

documents, to express the beliefs of the Church at large. Here were certain fundamental principles which required to be taken for granted by all who would call themselves by the name of Christ. Without a clear uniformity in these matters of doctrine, there could be no true Church.

John's purpose, then, is to shape a theology which will give adequate and authoritative expression to the common faith. The time had come when it was necessary once for all to mark out the doctrinal basis on which the Church might henceforth build itself in accordance with its true idea. It will become apparent as we inquire more fully into the theology of the Gospel, that its aim in this direction is of a twofold nature. On the one hand, it seeks to establish more firmly the genuine Christian tradition. In the passing over to a new time and a new culture, in the attempt to reconcile its faith with heathen philosophies, the Church was in danger of drifting away from its old anchorage. The memory of the life of Christ was fading into the background. The central significance of the Person of Christ was no longer recognised as it had been by the first Apostles. John perceived that the whole life and power of Christianity were bound up with the belief in Christ. If the Church was to survive and accomplish its mission, it must hold true to its primitive faith that God had manifested Himself to men through the historical life of Jesus Christ. The Logos doctrine of the Fourth Gospel marks a momentous innovation on the earlier

Christian theology, yet its inner purpose was wholly conservative. As against the dangerous tendencies of the new time, it re-affirmed with a stronger emphasis the original Christian position. Jesus in His living Person was the Way and the Truth and the Life. The divine revelation had come through Him, and He must ever be the one centre of Christian faith.

But along with this primary intention of basing the Church more firmly on its original foundation, there is another, hardly less prominent. While insisting on the beliefs which he recognised as essential, John desired to make room for the new elements of truth that had come to light in his own age, or might be revealed in after times. Already, perhaps, he foresaw the danger of an undue hardening and narrowing of the Church's doctrine, consequent on a too violent revulsion from heresy. He so broadens his own conception of Christianity as to admit much that has come to him from alien sources; and not only so, but he secures an inward principle of development by which the Church may be able from time to time to renew and enlarge its knowledge of the truth. The Spirit bequeathed by Christ was the abiding possession of His people. They were not dependent on any fixed tradition, but on the living Spirit, which was ever revealing new truth to them, unfolding more and more fully the original revelation of Christ. If the later Church constructed its rigid system of orthodox belief on the lines laid down by the Fourth Gospel, we need to remember that the Gospel itself

is the eternal protest against all such fixing of dogma. The true Church, as the Evangelist conceived it, was to hold fast the essential belief in Christ, so as to maintain a living fellowship with Him. Then in virtue of that fellowship it was to advance to ever clearer and fuller knowledge, renewing the outward forms of truth with each new age.

II. The ecclesiastical purpose comes out most clearly in the view of the Sacraments which is set before us in the Gospel. Already towards the close of the first century the whole life of the Church was bound up with the two great ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In his doctrine of the Sacraments we must seek for the key to John's position in regard to the general question of the Church.

One of the most striking peculiarities of the Gospel is the omission of the all-important narrative of the institution of the Supper. In the place where this narrative stands in the other Gospels we have the scene of the feet-washing, followed by the exhortation to mutual love and service. The omission and the substitution are both significant, and cannot well be explained except in one way. With his profound insight into the spiritual meaning of Christianity, John saw a danger in the increasing reverence attached to the outward rite of the Supper. The natural craving for something visible and material in religion had seized on the simple ordinance bequeathed by Jesus, and invested it with

a superstitious value. More particularly among those Greek Churches for which the evangelist wrote, the ideas that had grown up around the heathen mysteries were gradually transferring themselves to the Christian Sacrament, with the result that the Gospel message was half emptied of its meaning. The marked omission of the one incident which to many must have appeared the most important in the whole narrative, must have been intentional. John wished in the most decisive manner to subordinate the outward rite to what was spiritual and essential. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye love one another." "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." Not a ritual ordinance, but the inward spirit of love, truth, peace, was Christ's real bequest to His disciples, by which they would be kept in fellowship with one another and declare themselves to the world.

While John omits the actual incident of the foundation of the Supper, he deals at length with the sacramental idea in the discourse which follows the feeding of the five thousand, in the sixth chapter The eucharistic bearing of this chapter is quite apparent. Even the language used is of a technical character, and is borrowed from contemporary discussion regarding the nature of the Lord's Supper.

The discourse in this chapter is based on the preceding miracle, which, in accordance with John's method, becomes the symbolical expression of a permanent religious fact. Christ dispenses to the world the bread of life. He has in Himself an

inexhaustible divine life which He imparts from age to age to those who believe on Him. How is this life communicated? It might appear from the earlier portion of the discourse as if the process were conceived as wholly spiritual. Jesus demands a true belief on Himself as the revelation of God, a living communion with Him, an assimilation of our nature to His. But this spiritual process is associated, more and more definitely as the chapter draws to a close, with the ordinance of the Eucharist: "The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I give for the life of the world" (vi. 51). "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you" (53). "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him" (56). In sayings like these we have direct allusion to the Eucharist as the "medicine of immortality,"[1] the means of fellowship between Christ and the believer, the real appropriation of the body and blood of the Lord.

In this chapter, therefore, we seem to have two views, wholly contradictory to each other. The imparting of the bread of life, typified in the miracle, is the communication by Jesus of His own mind and spirit to His disciples. It is also identified in a special manner with the outward rite of the Eucharist. The contradiction is partly to be explained as an instance of John's peculiar method. He does not discard the common beliefs, even when they clash with his own, but accepts them formally in order to interpret and spiritualise them. In the

[1] Ignat. Eph. 20.

present instance he takes the popular conception of the religious value of the Supper, and sets it in the light of a higher and more reasonable conception. The outward ordinance becomes symbolical of the true communion with Christ by a life of faith and obedience. To "eat His flesh and drink His blood" is to appropriate His spirit, to make yourself one with Him so that He seems to live again in His disciple. John himself points us to some such symbolical import in his words, by the warning with which the discourse closes: "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing" (vi. 63). He indicates that the language he has borrowed from the common eucharistic usage must be taken in a higher acceptation. He has been speaking not so much of the literal body and blood of Christ conveyed through the visible elements of the Supper, as of something inward and spiritual. The external ordinance is only a symbol, of which the reality is a living and personal union with Christ.

Nevertheless it must be granted that John in this chapter lays an emphasis on the outward rite which cannot be wholly reconciled with his higher, more spiritual view. To him, as to the Church at large, the Eucharist was more than a ritual observance. He insists on its real validity, and relates it in the most solemn manner to the central facts of Christianity. We are compelled to recognise that he himself was affected with the sacramental ideas, against which, in their crude and unreasoned form, he makes his protest. He believes that in some mysterious manner the divine life is communicated

through the bread and wine, which represent the actual flesh and blood of the Lord. The full significance of this view of the Supper will be discussed later, in connection with the whole Johannine doctrine of Life. It will be seen that through his twofold conception of Jesus as at once the divine Logos and the historical Person, the evangelist is led to construe Life in metaphysical as well as in ethical terms. "In Him was Life" in the sense that He was the repository of a higher nature, different in kind from that of man. His purpose was to make men partakers of this life, by so uniting them with Himself that His divine essence is transfused into them. The eucharistic idea lends itself naturally to this view of Life as a sort of ethereal substance. It is adopted by John not merely out of deference to a deep-seated popular belief, but as an organic element in the structure of his own thought

His attitude to the Supper appears therefore to be of a twofold character. (1) He recognises the danger to the higher life of the Church of an external ordinance, observed as it was wont to be in a mechanical and superstitious spirit. The Christian rite had become more and more impregnated with influences from the surrounding cults of Paganism, with the result that the mere act of participating in the Supper was supposed to possess a supreme religious value. John seeks to counteract this unthinking, semi-heathen estimate of the ordinance. He dares to depart from the well-established tradition which assigned the insti-

tution of the Supper to the solemn hour immediately preceding the Lord's Passion. That which appears in the other Gospels as the first observance of the Eucharist becomes with him a simple Agape, and is associated with the giving of the new commandment "that ye love one another." The Church holds communion with Christ and proclaims Him to the world by manifesting that spirit of mutual love and service of which He had offered the supreme example. A formal act of worship, however sacred in itself, "profiteth nothing," and may even be a positive power for evil. When Judas received the sop, "Satan entered into him" (xiii. 27). To eat without discerning the Lord's body, without a sense of the inward, spiritual meaning of the rite, is to incur judgment through the Holy Supper. (2) John's purpose, however, is not to disparage the Sacrament, but to assert the great religious facts in which its real significance consists. The act which is nothing when it is performed ignorantly and mechanically, is of sovereign value to those who have apprehended its true meaning. The material elements represent the flesh and blood of Christ—His divine Person, given for the life of the world. He is present in them not merely by way of symbol, but actually, and His disciples by partaking of them become incorporated with His higher nature. But there must be something in the recipient corresponding to the spiritual reality which is conveyed through the gift. The outward act of participation must be accompanied with belief in Christ and a true insight into the nature of His work, and a will

to know and serve Him. The Sacrament becomes operative as the bread of life through this receptive spirit on the part of those who observe it.

The aim of the evangelist, therefore, was to substitute a deeper and more religious conception of the Supper for that which he found prevalent in the Church of his time. He sought to connect what was otherwise an outward rite, of the same order as the heathen mysteries, with the new and vital truths of Christianity. It seemed possible in this way at once to maintain the Supper as the central act of Christian worship, and to dissolve the superstitious reverence with which it was commonly regarded. The inward significance of the rite would be more than the rite itself. It became apparent in the course of the later development that the popular conception of the Supper had really been enhanced by this attempt to modify it. The spiritual implications on which John had laid the chief emphasis were more and more confused with the outward ordinance, till the distinction between symbol and reality was lost sight of altogether. For this result John cannot be held responsible, except in so far as his deeper interpretation was itself mingled with elements which were in the last resort unspiritual. His conception of Christ as Logos involves him in a view of Life which can only be described as semi-physical, and which runs parallel throughout with the purely religious view. Life as so regarded cannot be communicated except by a magical agency, and John discovered this agency in the Lord's Supper. One side at least of his thought,

though not the most vital or characteristic, had its legitimate outcome in the later Catholic doctrine.

The teaching of the Gospel on the Sacrament of Baptism is complicated by the controversy with the Baptist party, but this itself helps to throw light on the writer's main position. A certain value is granted to the baptism of John, although its formal, inadequate character is duly emphasised. It was a baptism "with water," as contrasted with the true baptism "with water and the Spirit." The discourse on the New Birth, in which these words occur, corresponds with that in the sixth chapter on the Bread of Life. The reference to Baptism, though scarcely so pronounced as the later reference to the Lord's Supper, is sufficiently evident, and bears out what has been said already of John's attitude to the sacraments. The entrance into the "kingdom of God" is a spiritual act, of which the outward rite of baptism is only the seal and symbol. A man is "born through the Spirit," and on this spiritual aspect of the great change the whole stress is laid throughout the chapter. None the less the "water" is co-operative with the Spirit. John accepts without question the ordinary Church doctrine of the mystical efficacy of Baptism, while he seeks at the same time to co-ordinate it with a more reasoned conception. The discourse in the third chapter will demand a fuller consideration at a later stage, but meanwhile it may be illustrated by two other passages which have likewise a manifest bearing on the subject of Baptism. The blind man, after his eyes have been anointed by

Jesus, is sent to wash in the Pool of Siloam, and having washed returns seeing (ix. 7). Here the miracle is due to the power of Jesus, who is the Light of the World, and this is insisted on by the detailed account of the anointing. Yet the work of Jesus only received its completion when the man had "washed." In other words, the rite of Baptism is necessary, not only as a seal and evidence of the saving work of Christ, but as the real perfecting of it. The transition from darkness to light, from the natural to the higher life, is effected in the sacramental act. The other passage is even more significant. It is contained in the dialogue between Jesus and Peter at the scene of the feet-washing (xiii. 8–10), when Jesus declares, "If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me," but explains further that after the first washing nothing is necessary save to wash the feet. The passage is a difficult one, but its general drift seems plain. The feet-washing is the sovereign expression of the spirit of Jesus, the spirit of humility and love and service. The disciples have no true part in the Christian life until they submit themselves entirely to this spirit, so that it becomes their own. Yet the new life of moral fellowship with Jesus presupposes a "washing" which consists apparently in the rite of Baptism. The daily cleansing by the spirit of Jesus is conditioned by that regenerative act, and at the same time confirms and perpetuates it.

John's attitude is thus the same in regard to both the Sacraments. As in the case of the

Supper, he purposely refrains from giving prominence to the outward ordinance of Baptism. When he passes over the incident of the baptism of Jesus, when he notes expressly that "Jesus baptized not, but His disciples" (iv. 2), the controversial interest, which was no doubt uppermost in his mind, may well have been blended with another. Baptism as a formal rite had come to occupy too central a place in the Church's devotion, and John desires to keep it in the background, in order to fix attention on certain spiritual facts. The mechanical act was nothing, apart from the higher process which constituted its inner meaning, and to which it gave effect. Man is born again through the Spirit, and only when this is recognised does the material element in Baptism become operative. Nevertheless the popular belief is so far accepted, and serves to give expression to one side of the evangelist's own thought. The regeneration through Christ is something more than a purely ethical process. It implies a transformation of the earthly man into a being of a higher nature,—a child of God in the same sense as Jesus, the eternal Logos, was divine. Baptism is the necessary miracle by which this change, half physical in its character, is made possible. With his deep religious instinct John feels the inadequacy of the sacramental doctrine, to which he is nevertheless committed, alike by his acceptance of the Church belief and by his own philosophical theory. He endeavours to broaden and vitalise it by forcing it into harmony with another order of ideas. The outward rite is in-

terpreted partly as a symbol, partly as the real condition of a moral change and a life of constant discipleship. But the ethical conception of Christianity cannot be harmonised with any doctrine of the efficacy of a ritual act, and the result of John's endeavour to give a deeper and more spiritual meaning to Baptism was the same as in the parallel instance of the Supper. By attaching the profoundest Christian ideas to a formal ordinance, he invested the ordinance itself with a new value, so that faith, in increasing measure, came to centre upon it. The "spiritual Gospel" had its outcome not in the purer, more vital religion which the writer dreamed of, but in the ritualism and lifeless externalism of the later Catholic Church.

III. If the Gospel was written with a view to the up-building of the Church, we look for some reference to Church government and organisation, all the more so as the second century was in these respects a time of critical transition. Already in the Epistles of Ignatius we have a foreshadowing of the episcopal system, with the transformation of the whole structure of the Church which it involved. The primitive form of organisation, relying as it did on a religious enthusiasm which was now waning, was no longer adequate to the new time and the larger needs. It had to be replaced by an elaborate system, administered according to rule and form by accredited leaders. The Fourth Gospel, written in that time of transition by one who spoke in name

of the Church, may fairly be expected to have some bearing on this important side of the Church's life; and in various allusions, which after the Johannine manner are veiled and indirect, we are justified in finding a reference to debated questions of Church government.

The relation of the Gospel to the rising system of episcopacy has recently been discussed by Mr. Purchas in a work of singular freshness and interest.[1] He argues that the evangelist seeks to combat the hard and fast *officialism* which was rapidly gaining ground in the Church. The "disciple whom Jesus loved" is the type of the true Christian member, whose fellowship with the Lord is immediate and personal, and takes his place above Peter, the official representative of the Church. Mr. Purchas would even construe the eucharistic references in the Gospel as part of a protest against the new system. The administration of the Supper, to which increasing importance was attaching itself, had placed the stated leaders of the different churches in a position of great influence. By spiritualising the conception of the Supper, by subordinating it to the true sacrament of love and service, John seeks to lessen the prestige of self-seeking officials. He shows how those even who are excluded from the visible communion may still preserve the inward fidelity to Christ. There is much that is attractive in this reading of the Gospel, and, taken broadly, it doubtless expresses a true and important

[1] *Johannine Problems and Modern Needs* (1901).

side of the evangelist's purpose. He is the exponent of a wider and more spiritual view of Christianity, and joins issue with various influences of his time which tended to narrow and externalise it. But there is no evidence that "officialism" in the second century was regarded as such an influence. On the contrary, we have abundant evidence that to the higher minds of the Church the new system appeared the best safeguard of all that was most vital in Christianity. The "angels of the churches" were the repositories of the genuine Christian tradition, the chief witnesses in times of persecution, the sureties of the common brotherhood. The literature of the second century reflects the deliberate effort to confirm them in their place and authority, and so build up the Church as an institution fully organised for its great work.

Accepting the view, therefore, that one main purpose with John was to assert the spirituality of the Church, we may yet believe that he had no quarrel with the growing officialism. He may well have considered that the higher objects of the community would be best served by securing for it a strong and efficient government. Over against the mass of heathenism Christ required to have "His own —the nucleus of spiritual life which would gradually gather to itself the scattered children of God. Such a community would be able to maintain itself and cherish a due consciousness of its high calling, only as it was knit together as an organic body. Its growth in

spiritual power was so far dependent on the outward mechanism of institution and government.

Instead of protesting against the "officialism' which had taken the place of the loose organisation of an earlier time, the evangelist probably intended to set it on a firmer basis. It was the necessary means to that "unity" which he demanded as the essential attribute of a true Church. It was bound up with that theory of the sacraments which, as we have seen, he accepted, even while he sought to deepen and purify it. Apart, however, from this general probability, there are passages in the Gospel that seem to bear directly on the subject of Church leadership, and these confirm us in the view that John acknowledged the new system and desired to strengthen it.

The main passage is the parable, or rather allegory, of the Good Shepherd in the tenth chapter. The drift of this parable first becomes clear to us when we realise that Jesus is speaking not so much of the sheep as of the under-shepherds, —the guardians whom He has appointed for His people. "I am the door of the sheep," *i.e.* the door through which alone they can be approached. "He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd. And the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall go in and out, and find pasture," *i.e.* for the sheep entrusted to him. Jesus speaks throughout of the conditions under which the pastoral office must

be exercised,—the necessity that those who are employed in it should act in His name and possess His spirit. Further on, with a variation of the image, He describes Himself as the "true shepherd," the pattern shepherd whom His subordinates must strive to imitate. They are not to be as hirelings who flee when the wolf cometh, but must be prepared to give their life on behalf of the sheep, like Jesus Himself. The immediate purpose of the parable is to raise the ideal for those who had been set over Christ's flock, and who in many cases had proved unworthy of their office, entering on it with false motives and beliefs not truly Christian, and failing the Church in time of persecution. The false shepherds are denounced because the position they have misused is such a sacred and important one. It is assumed—and against this condition of things the evangelist makes no protest—that Christ's people depend for everything, for pasture, safety, guidance, example, on the leaders placed over them. An office so all-important ought to be held by men who understood their obligations. The leaders of the Church must learn to consider themselves as standing in Christ's place, and take example, in their relations to the sheep committed to them, from the chief Shepherd. The whole parable bears the impress of a time when the post of leadership in the Church had gained for itself a peculiar dignity, and John has no desire to subvert or even modify the new ecclesiastical system. His aim is rather to strengthen it, by insisting that the leaders must

be worthy of their office, and rule in Christ's spirit for purely spiritual ends.

This conclusion is borne out by the position assigned in the Gospel to the disciples. As a body they are the Church itself in its earliest beginnings, but the fact is also kept in view that they are the destined leaders of the Church. "As My Father hath sent Me, even so I send you" (xx. 21). "Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning" (xv. 27). The intercourse of Jesus with His disciples, while it typifies His abiding fellowship with all believers, has thus a more special significance to those who hold authority in the Church. They stand in a relation to the chief Shepherd similar to that of the Apostles, whose work has devolved on them. They are to take warning and example in their own present service from Peter and Philip and Thomas and the disciple whom Jesus loved. It is noteworthy that the Apostles, as they appear in the Gospel, already occupy a place which may be described as official. They act as intermediaries between Christ and the people in a manner plainly suggesting the stated ministry of the later time. Jesus does not Himself baptize, but entrusts this duty to His disciples (iv. 2). The Greeks who desire to meet Him at the feast present their request through Philip and Andrew, who communicate it to Jesus (xii. 21, 22). The disciples are finally set apart, after Christ has risen from the dead, as His representatives. He

breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained" (xx. 22, 23). This commission is given to the disciples in virtue of their office as the messengers appointed by Christ (21), and is valid for those who should succeed them. The leaders of the Church are constituted as a definite priesthood, with full power to act in the Lord's name, and to mediate His forgiveness and the gifts of His Spirit.

The Gospel presents us, therefore, with a theory of the Church in which the dual character of John's thinking is everywhere discernible. He begins with a conception of Christianity as the absolute religion which makes its appeal to all mankind; but this universalism is crossed by the idea of the Christian Church as a body strictly separate. The people of Christ, gathered though they are out of all nations, are divided in the sharpest manner from the surrounding "world," and form a distinct community with an organic life of its own. The dualism is even more pronounced in the elaboration of this idea of a holy and separate community. On the one hand, the Church endeavours to realise the spiritual religion inaugurated by Christ. It is a world-wide brotherhood of those who worship the Father in spirit and truth, and the one criterion of membership is that personal nearness to Christ which was exemplified once for all in the beloved disciple. On the other hand, the Church is an

outward institution, a kingdom by itself over against the kingdoms of this world. Those only have part in it who have undergone a special initiation, and have conformed to certain given requirements of belief and ritual. John wavers continually between these two conceptions, and seeks as far as possible to reconcile them. He widens the boundaries of doctrine and admits a principle of free theological development, while he accentuates the demand for orthodoxy. He interprets the sacraments in their spiritual import:—Baptism as the symbol of entrance into the new life, the Eucharist as typifying the inward communion with Christ; but none the less he accepts these rites as possessed of a real validity. He insists on a loftier standard of Christian character and fidelity in the Church leaders, and grants them authority only as they act in the name of the chief Shepherd. But he sanctions the official system which had displaced the freer organisation of the early time, and would purify it in order to confirm it in its privileges. Thus in every direction he enforces the spiritual idea of the Church, and at the same time magnifies the outward institution.

This twofold attitude was imposed on him, in the first place, by the practical needs and circumstances of his age. There were two opposite tendencies within the Church, each of which constituted a grave danger. The more powerful of these tendencies was towards a hard and fast externalism. Now that the early enthusiasm had spent itself, attention was more and more con-

centrated on the building up of an organisation that might supply its place. The unity of the Spirit gave way to an outward uniformity which was secured by a hierarchy of officers, a fixed ritual, a harder definition of creed, a closer amalgamation of the scattered companies of believers. Ecclesiastical interests tended to bulk more largely in men's minds than the weightier matters of the religious life. This growing externalism, inevitable in the second period of every great movement, was aggravated by certain special influences to which the Church at that time was exposed. Converts from heathenism brought over with them the crude sacramental ideas that had gathered around the Mysteries. Jewish conceptions of a priesthood and a statutory law had become naturalised in Christian thought. Even the spectacle of Roman Government, with its majestic order and cohesion, supplied an ideal which the Church also strove to realise. As a result of these and similar influences, all working together, Christianity had become to a large extent secularised. The Catholic Church as an outward organisation was identified with the kingdom of God.

There was, however, another tendency of quite an opposite nature, but hardly less dangerous to the future of the new religion. It had its outcome a generation later in the extravagances of Montanism, but was already operative from the very beginning of the century. A section of the Church, conscious that a barren externalism was encroaching on the higher interests, demanded a return to the example

of the primitive age. The Church of the Apostles had required no set forms of worship and administration: why should they be necessary now? Christianity as a spiritual religion must allow room for the free activity of the Spirit, which would manifest itself still as in the first days if the restraints of an artificial order were removed. It was forgotten, however, that the Church of the second century was different in character, and was placed in a different world, from the primitive community. The spontaneous enthusiasm of the early time had spent itself, and all attempts to revive it, in precisely the same form, were in their nature futile and unreal. The little company of believers had grown to a vast multitude, dispersed over many lands, and the primitive methods of government could no longer suffice. Without some organised system, enabling it to hold its own under the new conditions, the Church in a little time would have fallen to pieces.

The evangelist wrote, then, in view of these two opposing tendencies, and with both of them he is in partial sympathy. He is conscious that the higher religious interest was in danger, and his Gospel, on one side of it, is a protest against the externalism which was invading the whole life of the Church. He asks for a fuller recognition of the spiritual nature of Christianity. He holds that rites and forms are meaningless without an apprehension of the inward truth which they exhibit by way of symbol. None the less he accepts the Church, with its system and ordinances, as the

necessary embodiment of the Christian revelation. He believes that it was implicit from the first in the intention of Christ, and that He Himself through His living Spirit has been ordering its development. What he demands is not a simple return to the primitive example, but a truer conformity of the outward structure of the Church to its inward idea. The unity of organisation ought to have its counterpart in a unity of love and service. The act of sacrament ought to be more than a mechanical observance, and represent a real communion of the believer with Christ. It was necessary to build up the Church as an institution, but the body ought all to be governed and pervaded by the quickening Spirit.

The double conception of the Church may therefore be explained, at least in part, by the peculiar circumstances of the time; but it is connected still more vitally with the twofold theory of the Christian revelation on which the Gospel rests. Jesus is, on the one hand, the Logos who mediates to men the divine life, and His work on this side is wholly of a mystical and magical character. As He manifested Himself in the flesh, and thus informed the lower nature with the higher, so He perpetuates His incarnation by means of the Church. The outward institution, even as such, is something holy and mysterious, since it is like the visible dwelling-place of the Logos, the sphere within which His presence reveals itself over against the world. John accepts in a yet fuller and more literal sense the idea of Ephesians, that the Church

is the body of Christ,—the vesture of flesh which the eternal Word is always renewing in order to abide with men for ever. "I am no more in the world, but these are in the world" (xvii. 11);—the community of the disciples, as the germinal Church, is to replace Christ after He is gone, and to manifest Him as still present. The idea is worked out at length in the latter part of the intercessory prayer, which traces the several analogies between Christ Himself and His Church. "They shall have My joy fulfilled in themselves; they are not of the world, as I am not of the world. As Thou hast sent Me, even so also I have sent them; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee" (xvii. 13 ff.). The idea is impressed on us from many different sides, that Christ is mysteriously related to His Church, that He reappears through it in a kind of new incarnation. And the reverence paid by John to the Church as a visible community springs ultimately out of this idea, which is itself the natural amplification of the initial thesis,—"the Word was made flesh."

Yet the conception of Jesus which lies deepest in the evangelist's mind is the simple religious one. The revelation has come to him through his knowledge of the actual Person, and the Logos doctrine is at best an after-thought, an attempt to construe under forms of reason what had first been given to faith. We shall find in the teaching of the Gospel generally that the pure religious idea is always blended with the theological, and at times breaks through it altogether; and this is true in a very

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signal manner of the theory of the Church. John, indeed, lays stress on the outward community, the visible organ through which the Logos continues to manifest Himself; but along with this mystical view he gives prominence to another. The Church is a spiritual brotherhood, and all have part in it who confess the name of Jesus. Its function is to realise in the world those new ideals of love and service and holiness which were exemplified once for all in the Saviour's life. The one condition of true membership is to share in the Spirit of Christ through personal communion with Him. In the little company of disciples gathered around Jesus at the Supper, John sees the prototype of the future Church; and he speaks of one among them "who lay on Jesus' bosom, whom Jesus loved." This beloved disciple represents the Church in its essential idea. All the rest is temporary and external, and the one thing necessary is the inward fellowship, by faith and love, with Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER V

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LOGOS

BETWEEN the Synoptic records and that of the Fourth Evangelist there is one broad difference, evident on the very surface. The earlier writers are concerned almost wholly with the life of Jesus in its outward expression, with the actions and sayings in which He revealed His spirit. They are content to set the life before us and leave it to produce its own effect, as it did on the disciples who first witnessed it. John, on the other hand, starts from the impression which had been made on him by his knowledge of the divine life. He assumes from the outset that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and construes the history in the light of this assumption. Reversing the method of the Synoptists, he does not reason from the outward actions to the Person behind them, but judges the work from his theory of the Person.

The Gospel commences with a prologue, written apparently with the express intention of placing the reader at the right point of view for understanding the story which is to follow. This Jesus, whose life on earth is about to pass before us, was a divine Person. He was one with the Logos, who had

been with God from the beginning, and through whom the world was made. In virtue of His divine nature, He possessed the true life, and came that He might impart it to men. The conception thus set forth in the prologue is never again reverted to in so many words, but it pervades the Gospel and supplies the key by which its teaching must be interpreted. Jesus was the Word made flesh. He was the Life-giver and the absolute revelation of God, because in His own Person He was the eternal Logos.

The idea of a Logos, an immanent reason in the world, is one that meets us under various modifications in many ancient systems of thought, —Indian, Egyptian, Persian. In view of the religious syncretism of the second century, it is barely possible that these extraneous theologies may have exercised some influence on the Fourth Evangelist, but there can be little doubt in regard to the main source from which his Logos doctrine was derived. It had come down to him through Philo, after its final development in Greek philosophy.

In the sixth century before Christ, Heraclitus first broke away from the purely physical conceptions, which had hitherto prevailed among Greek thinkers, by discovering a λόγος, a principle of reason, at work in the cosmic process. From the obscure fragments of this philosopher which have been preserved to us we can gather that he was chiefly interested in accounting for the æsthetic order of the visible universe. In the arrangement of material phenomena, in the adaptation of means

to ends, he discerned the working of a power analogous to the reasoning power in man. His speculation was still entangled with the physical hypotheses of earlier times, and on this account dropped out of sight, and had little influence on the greater systems of Greek thought. Plato and Aristotle gave themselves to the elaboration of the theory of ideas, with its absolute separation between the material world and the world of higher reality. Their work was of profound significance for the future development of Logos speculation, but belongs in itself to a different philosophical movement.

It was in the reaction from Platonic dualism that the Logos idea again asserted itself, and was worked out through all its implications in Stoicism. The Stoics, animated chiefly by a practical interest, sought to bridge the gulf between the world of true being, as conceived by Plato, and the actual world of man's existence. They abandoned the theory of super-sensible archetypes, and fell back on the simpler hypothesis of Heraclitus, that the universe is pervaded through all its parts with an eternal reason. Man in his individual life may lift himself above all that limits him, and realise his identity with this Logos, which resides in his own soul, and is also the governing principle of the world. The Stoic philosophy not only furnished the general conception of the Logos to later thinkers, but also laid down the distinction which became of prime importance in the after development. The faculty of reason, as it exists in man, utters itself in speech, which is denoted by the same

Greek word, λόγος. To the universal λόγος Stoicism assigned the same two attributes as mark the reasoning power in man. On the one hand, it is λόγος ἐνδιάθετος, reason in its inner movement and potentiality ; and, on the other hand, λόγος προφορικός, reason projected and made concrete in the endless variety of the visible world. This distinction within the Stoic doctrine forms the point of attachment by which the Logos idea connected itself with Christianity.

With Philo of Alexandria the speculation enters definitely on a new phase. This Jewish thinker takes over the main Stoic conception, but combines it with other elements, borrowed eclectically from previous systems of thought. The Logos idea is loosened from its connection with Stoic materialism, and harmonised with a thorough-going Platonism, which regards the visible things as only the types and shadows of realities laid up in the higher world. It becomes identical in great measure with Plato's Idea of the Good, except that it is further regarded as creatively active. Philo is thus led to an all-important departure from the original Stoic doctrine. His Logos, instead of being merely immanent in things, is endowed with an independent existence. It is detached from the world of matter, which nevertheless it creates and orders. But Philo grafts his conception on a system of thought more alien to Stoicism than even the ideal speculation of Plato. While a Greek philosopher, he was also an orthodox Jew, to whom the Old Testament

Scriptures were the authoritative revelation of all truth. He adopted the Logos theory and made it central to his system, primarily because it offered a means of transition from Judaism to Greek philosophy. Without abandoning the Jewish belief in one supreme God, it became possible, through the hypothesis of the Logos, to describe the divine activity in terms of Hellenic thought. Not only so, but Judaism thus reconstructed seemed to be rendered more consistent with itself. The same problem which Stoicism had endeavoured to solve by its reversion to the Logos doctrine had become urgent in Jewish theology. Here also all progress, alike in the moral and the intellectual life, was in danger of being arrested by an overstrained dualism. The effort to conceive of God as absolutely transcendent had resulted in separating Him altogether from the world, of which He had still to be regarded as the Creator and Governor. Already in later Old Testament thought, much more in rabbinical speculation, we can trace the idea of an intermediary between God and the world. Wisdom is described in Job and Proverbs, with something more than a poetical personification, as God's agent and co-worker. Peculiar significance was attached, by the later interpreters, to the various Old Testament allusions to the Word of God. By His "Word" He had created heaven and earth, and revealed Himself to His prophets. The actual hypostatising of the divine Word in the doctrine of the Memra was probably subsequent to the time of Philo, but it was the outcome of a mode of

thinking already common in Jewish theology. God, who was Himself the high and holy One, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, mediated His action through the divine Word. It was natural for Philo, with his Greek culture and philosophical bent of mind, to advance a step on the Jewish speculation of his time, and identify the Word of the Old Testament with the Stoic λόγος.

The Logos of Philo requires to be understood in the light of this double descent from Hellenic and Old Testament thought. The Stoic conception, as we have seen, took account of the two meanings of the term λόγος, reason and uttered speech, but the distinction was of little practical importance. What the Greek thinkers sought to affirm was the rationality of the world. The Logos under all its aspects was simply the principle of reason, informing the infinite variety of things, and so creating the world-order. To Philo, on the other hand, the idea of reason was combined with that of divine energy and self-revelation. According to the story in Genesis, God had created all things by His word, and the universe as we see it is nothing else than the projection and embodiment of His will. Philo remains true to this fundamental Hebrew conception ; and while describing his Logos in language directly borrowed from Plato and the Stoics, he regards it in the last resort as dynamic. It represents the sum of forces which have their ground in the will of God, working harmoniously together as the immanent reason of the world.

This difference between Philo and the Greek

thinkers is connected with another and still more vital one. To the Stoics the eternal reason was itself an ultimate principle, and the necessity was not felt of explaining it as the reason of God. The doctrine of the Logos may indeed be regarded as an attempt, more or less conscious, to escape from the belief in a divine Creator. His place is taken by the infinite reason, in which all things live and move and have their being, and which in deference to popular ideas might be described as God. Philo could not content himself with this notion of an absolute Logos. He started from the Jewish belief in a supreme, self-existing God, to whom the creative reason of the world must be related and subordinated. It must be regarded as in some manner His reason, working in accordance with His being and will. To this clashing of the primary Greek conception with the demands of Hebrew monotheism we may largely attribute one of the most perplexing peculiarities of the Philonic doctrine. The Logos appears sometimes as only an aspect of the activity of God, at other times as a "second God," an independent and, it might seem, a personal being. There can be little doubt that Philo, as an orthodox Jew, had no real intention of affirming the existence of two divine agents; and the passages in which he appears to detach and personify the Logos must be explained mainly in a figurative sense. The Word which is described as speaking, acting, creating of itself is God's word, vividly realised by an imaginative thinker. But at the same time this strain of Philonic thought bears

witness to the original independence of the Logos idea, which still maintains itself alongside of the Jewish monotheistic belief. In order to explain how God may act on the world, Philo has recourse to the Logos of the Stoic philosophy, which in his mind becomes the outgoing of the sovereign will of God. But the Greek idea is thus built into a theological structure to which it has no real adaptation. The Alexandrian thinker is compelled to waver between two different theories, and to assign to the Logos of philosophy a semi-independent place beside the supreme God.

In one respect Philo has a much closer affinity to Greek speculation than to the Old Testament. He elaborates his Logos doctrine chiefly in a cosmic interest. The problem he had set himself was the same as that which had occupied the Greek thinkers from Thales downwards,—to explain how the world had come into being and maintained itself as an intelligible order. The Old Testament conception of an absolutely righteous God is replaced by the Platonic doctrine of a divine architect, who has formed in his mind the perfect patterns of all existence, and seeks to realise them in the visible universe. We have little difficulty in resolving all the various functions assigned to the Logos into this primary one of mediating the creative activity of God. (1) It is the agency by which God reveals Himself. The appearances of God recorded in the Old Testament are explained by Philo as manifestations of the Logos. In like manner the patriarchs and prophets were men to

whom the Logos communicated itself with peculiar force and clearness; hence their knowledge of God. To a less degree God reveals Himself to all men. "Every man in virtue of his intelligence bears a kinship to the divine Logos, and becomes an express image or fragment of the higher nature" (*De opif. mund.* 51). The Hebrew idea of revelation is thus brought into line with the Stoic hypothesis of an all-pervasive Logos, attaining to consciousness of itself in man. (2) Through the Logos man is enabled to lay hold of the higher spiritual life. The mass of men are entangled in the web of illusion, and the divine element in them is obscured by ignorance and sensual passions. A man becomes spiritual according as he lifts himself to the contemplation of the Logos, and endeavours to judge all things in the light of it. Here again the dominant idea is that of participation in the universal reason. Philo's "spiritual man" is identical with the philosopher, who can rise above his partial, individual point of view and make himself one with the sovereign mind that pervades all being. (3) Consequently, the Logos is the agent of deliverance, of salvation. He who has part in it is lifted out of the stream of circumstance, and becomes a citizen of the heavenly world of freedom. "They who have real knowledge of the one Creator and Father of all things are rightly addressed as the sons of the one God. And even if we are not yet fit to be called the sons of God, still we may deserve to be called the children of His eternal image, of His most sacred Logos" (*Conf.*

ling. 28). In so far as men can possess themselves of the Logos nature, enter into sympathy with the higher reason behind all visible things, they are sons of God, and have in their souls the earnest of immortality.

The Fourth Gospel is based on a doctrine of the Logos which to all appearance is closely similar to that of Philo. In the prologue the main features of the Philonic conception are reproduced in vivid summary,—the eternal existence of the Word, its relation to God as towards Him (*πρὸς τὸν θεόν*) and yet distinct, its creative activity, its function in the illumination and deliverance of men. The prologue assumes that the idea of the Logos is already a familiar one in Christian theology. It is introduced abruptly, as requiring no defence or explanation, and its different aspects are lightly indicated, by way of reminding the reader of truths sufficiently known to him. The doctrine of Philo had therefore naturalised itself in Christian thought before it was taken up by the Fourth Evangelist, and must already have undergone a certain modification. At the same time, every verse in the prologue offers striking analogies to corresponding sayings of Philo. We have seen reason to believe that John had acquainted himself directly with the works of the Alexandrian thinker, and consciously derived from them.

To what extent does the Philonic conception change its character as it assimilates itself to the theology of the Gospel? Before an answer can

be given to this question, it is necessary to consider a preliminary difficulty with which Johannine criticism has been largely occupied ever since the appearance of Harnack's famous pamphlet.[1] Is the prologue to be regarded as an organic portion of the Gospel, or is it, as Harnack contends, a mere preface, written to conciliate the interest of a philosophical public? The idea of Christ as the divine Logos is nowhere resumed in the body of the Gospel. The term λόγος is constantly used, but always in its ordinary sense of spoken discourse, while the categories of Light, Life, Love are substituted for the Logos of the prologue. The work as we have it is no metaphysical treatise, such as we might expect from the opening verses if they truly set forth its programme, but a historical document, the narrative of the earthly life of Jesus Christ. In spite, however, of Harnack's powerful argument, the almost unanimous voice of Johannine criticism has declared against him. Closer examination of the prologue in its connection with the Gospel has resulted in multiplied proof that the ideas stated at the outset are woven in with the whole tissue of the work. The prologue supplies the background, the atmosphere, by which we are enabled to contemplate the whole history in its right perspective. Nevertheless, while Harnack's main argument cannot be accepted, it serves to remind us of one fact which can scarcely be emphasised too much. John is not concerned

[1] *Ueber das Verhältniss des Prologs des vierten Evangeliums zum ganzen Werk* (1892).

merely with the Word, but with the Word made flesh. After the first few verses, in which he treats of the pre-existent Logos, he passes to the historical life of Jesus, who was not simply to be identified with the Word. In Him it had become visible and human, and acted on men with a personal influence. Hence there is no more mention of the Word, which ceases with the prologue to be the subject of the Gospel. Through Jesus the Word manifested itself, informing all His actions and sayings with a divine significance, but it was henceforth the Word made flesh, indissolubly bound up with the human personality. The theme of the Gospel is not the Logos, but the divine Person, Jesus Christ.

John therefore accepts the Philonic conception in order to assimilate it to his account of a historical Person, through whom the Word declared itself under the conditions of human life. It is evident that the conception could not be so adapted without submitting to radical modifications. (1) The Logos which was to clothe itself in flesh and act on men with the force of a personality, must in its ultimate ground be a personal being. We have seen that Philo, partly through a poetical impulse, partly because of the composite origin of his speculation, attributes a semi-independence to his Logos. This prepared the way for the later personification, but Philo himself thinks only of a divine principle, the creative reason of God. John, however, makes it an essential moment in his conception, that the Logos has a ground of independent being within God. He solemnly repeats in the second verse of

the prologue "the same was in the beginning towards God,"—not absorbed in Him, but standing over against Him as a distinct Person. His view even of the pre-existent Logos is dominated by his knowledge of its ultimately "becoming flesh." There must have subsisted from all eternity an essential distinction of being within the divine nature before the Word could at last appear in Jesus Christ. (2) The creative activity of the Logos, which in Philo is determinative of the whole conception, falls into the background. Only in one verse ("All things were made by Him") do we have any clear trace of this aspect of Logos doctrine, and the sequence of thought would still be complete although the brief allusion were omitted. It is thrown out, apparently, by way of acknowledgment of the recognised theory. Some reference to the cosmic significance of the Logos was necessary if any link with previous speculation was to be preserved. To John himself the mode in which the world came into being was not a question of primary or even of secondary interest. He is concerned wholly with the spiritual life as it resides in the Logos, and is communicated by Him to men. Not only does the cosmology of Philo fall out of sight, but it even appears to be controverted. The Gospel knows nothing of that absolute transcendence of God which made the theory of an intermediate agent necessary to the Alexandrian thinker. It assumes, on the contrary, that the world is the direct object of God's love and providence (iii. 16). It maintains that God acts immediately on the human

soul, and so prepares the way for the redeeming work of the Logos (vi. 44). The hypothesis on which Philo builds is thus set aside, and the Logos as he conceives it ceases to have any real place or function. We have entered an entirely new world of thought, in which the Philonic idea is brought into new relations and radically transformed. (3) In the Gospel, much more emphatically than in Philo, the term λόγος denotes word as well as reason. Philo took advantage of the double meaning of the term to read the Hebrew idea of the creative energy of God into the Stoic philosophy; but to him, as to his Greek masters, the λόγος is still predominantly the divine reason. In the working out of his system he proceeds almost entirely on the lines of Plato, and only by a stray allusion here and there allows prominence to the Hebrew idea. In John, on the other hand, the term λόγος discards its philosophical meaning, or retains it as little more than a faintly colouring element. The Word is regarded throughout as the expression of God's will and power, the self-revelation of His inward nature. From the speculations of the Greek thinkers the evangelist reverts, as he indicates in his opening sentence, to the idea of Genesis. The ultimate ground of all things was the word, the word of power by which God uttered Himself. So in the following verses the whole stress is laid on the Life that was in the Logos. It was not an abstract Reason, but a divine energy, potent and life-giving; it was the inward being of God become active and going out from Him. In its fundamental thought

the prologue is more directly related to the Old Testament than to Philo. It presents, under forms borrowed from Alexandrian speculation, the Hebrew idea of the Word of God, by which He at once reveals Himself and gives effect to His purpose. On this conception of the Logos the ensuing Gospel is based. Christ is "sent out from the Father," as speech goes out from a man and reveals his inward mind and character; and as the divine Word He is also, in accordance with the Hebrew idea, the medium of God's quickening power. "In Him was life." "Ye have life through His name."

The Philonic doctrine, therefore, is not accepted by John without essential modifications. His impression of the actual life of Christ reacts on the philosophical hypothesis from which he sets out, and fills it with a new content. His Logos is not an abstract principle, but a Person; not a cosmic, but a spiritual agent; not creative reason, but the revealing Word of God. None the less, when he borrows the Philonic term he undoubtedly intends that it should bear the same general connotation as it does in Philo. Jesus Christ was one with that divine Logos in which Greek and Alexandrian thinkers had recognised the highest object of knowledge. All that had been predicated of the Logos could likewise be predicated of him. He was not only the Jesus of history, but a pre-existent being, δεύτερος θεός, the supreme agent and manifestation of God.

The question whether the Johannine view of the Logos corresponds at all points with the Philonic

view, is in the last resort comparatively unimportant. Probably John himself did not think out his conception with any clearness or fulness. He availed himself of the Logos idea for a practical purpose,—to make more intelligible to his own mind and the minds of his readers the divine nature of Jesus Christ. In accepting it, therefore, he does not commit himself to the precise interpretation that Philo placed upon it; on the contrary, he departs, whether consciously or not, from the characteristic lines of Philo's thinking. But when all this is granted, we have still to reckon with the main fact that he rests his account of the Christian revelation on a speculative idea, borrowed, with whatever differences, from Philo. Into the historical tradition of the life and teaching of Jesus he works a hypothesis which in its origin had nothing to do with Christianity, and which had come into being to meet a philosophical rather than a religious need. The consequences of this will become more and more apparent as we pursue our study of the Gospel.

The Philonic doctrine, then, is appropriated with important changes of which John himself does not appear to be fully conscious. It was no part of his intention to reason out the philosophical idea of the Logos, and he passes at once to his grand thesis that "the Word became flesh" in Jesus Christ. How does he conceive of this union of the Logos nature with the human Person? The answer, doubtless, is that here again he makes no attempt to formulate his thought in precise theo-

logical terms. There is no indication that the problem of the two natures, which entered so largely into later theories of the Incarnation, ever presented itself to his mind. He assumes the presence of the eternal Logos in Jesus Christ as a fact incapable of further definition. "The Word became flesh," —appeared in Christ as a human personality. How and when this union of natures was effected, and to what extent the divine could be distinguished from the human,—these are questions which John does not try to answer, and which probably he never asked himself. His silence is partly to be explained by the practical intention with which he wrote. It was not his purpose to discuss the divinity of Christ as a theological idea, but to impress it on his readers as a fact, by the knowledge of which they "might have life." There was no need to inquire in what way the power of God was able to manifest itself in a human Person. It had actually done so. The whole life of Christ was evidence that God dwelt in Him, and all that was required of men was to believe in this revelation of God. At the same time, the vagueness with which John states his doctrine of the presence of the Logos in Christ is capable of another explanation. He had set himself to combine ideas which were radically incompatible, and could only do so by a certain confusion of thought. The questions that arose later in the great controversy regarding the two natures are all legitimately suggested by the simple statement, "The Word became flesh." How were the divine and human so blended in Christ that each element

should fully subsist in Him without neutralising the other? Which of them constituted His will, the real core of His personality? How far was the Logos emptied of its divine attributes during the sojourn in the flesh, and being so emptied did it still continue to be the true Logos? John does not trouble himself with such questions, which would doubtless have seemed to him futile and meaningless, but they were involved in his doctrine, and duly emerged when it was subjected to strict analysis. We are compelled to admit that in the great thesis "The Word became flesh" two judgments, different in kind, are forced together. On the one hand there is the conviction, based on an actual religious experience, that God was manifest in Christ. Through the life of Jesus a new power had entered the world, which evidenced itself, to all who had felt it, as the authentic power of God. But this judgment of faith is stated in terms of an arbitrary theological idea. Jesus was the revelation of God because the Logos, the divine principle of Philonic speculation, became incarnate in Him. He was one with God in a metaphysical sense, through His identity with the eternal Word. In the later theology this speculative theory of the Person of Christ was carried out to its logical issue, and resulted in endless confusion, and in the substitution of a barren dogma for a living faith. The idea of the Logos, when all is said, was an artificial hypothesis, and was utterly inadequate to set forth the true significance of the revelation in Christ. John accepts the hypothesis, but does not press it

to its full extent. He is saved from the vain speculations of later teachers, because along with the Logos theory another conception is present to his mind, and in the last resort determines all his thinking. Jesus, by His life and death, by the spirit of love and holiness that dwelt in Him, had revealed God. Apart altogether from abstract questionings about His nature, faith recognised Him as divine. The Logos doctrine as John accepted it was only an attempt, and necessarily a vain attempt, to define by reason a truth which he had apprehended by faith.

Two conceptions of the life of Christ are thus latent in the thesis of the prologue, "The Word became flesh." In the body of the Gospel John makes no further mention of the specific theory of the Logos, and appears to concern himself entirely with the historical Person of Jesus. He abandons, it might seem, the speculative idea, and seeks to reproduce the impression made on him by the actual life. But while it is partly true that the explicit doctrine of the prologue passes out of sight, the endeavour is still maintained to discover the presence of the Logos in the earthly life of Jesus. His humanity is different in essence from that of the men around him. Through all His acts and words a "glory" shines out and reveals Him as the Only-begotten of the Father. In several clearly marked directions we can trace this conception of Jesus as the Logos in the picture presented to us of the actual life.

(1) Peculiar stress is laid on the miracles performed by Jesus. The Synoptic writers also insist on this aspect of our Lord's activity, but between their narratives and that of John there are essential differences. In the first place, the very word σημεῖον, applied by John to the works of Jesus, indicates his view of their character. They were the "signs" of His divinity; He "manifested forth His glory" (ii. 11) by these displays of supernatural power. It is noticeable that the motive of compassion, to which the miracles are for the most part ascribed in the Synoptics, is kept in the background by John. As he conceives them, the works, even when most beneficent, are sheer exhibitions of power, intended by Jesus to inspire belief in His divine claims. The man born blind is restored to sight in order that "the Light of the world" may declare Himself; not only so, but his blindness was inflicted on him for this very purpose, that "the works of God should be manifest" in the miraculous healing (ix. 3). The appeal of the nobleman on behalf of his dying son is only answered because the people will not believe on Christ without the witness of signs and wonders (iv. 48). Even in the story of Lazarus, where the motive of pity and human friendship is made most prominent, Jesus waits until His friend is dead and buried, for the sake of enhancing the splendour of the ensuing miracle. Its meaning as a work of compassion is altogether secondary to its higher significance, as the supreme manifestation of the "glory of God" to those who would believe (xi. 40).

The miracle at Cana is in this connection the most instructive of all. No ethical motive can possibly be forced into it; the sole end for which it was performed was to reveal the "glory," the divine, creative power of Christ. It belongs to this view of the miracles as *σημεῖα* that their wonderful, superhuman character is strongly emphasised. The Johannine narratives, as compared with the Synoptic, uniformly heighten the marvellous element, so that any attempt to resolve the miracle into a natural event is rendered impossible. The nobleman's son is healed from a distance by the bare word of Christ. The blind man is blind from his birth. Lazarus is not newly dead, like Jairus' daughter and the young man of Nain, but has been in his grave four days, and his body has undergone corruption. So when the Synoptics are closely followed, as in the feeding of the five thousand and the walking on the sea, the miracles chosen are of a specially wonderful character, and could not in any case be explained except as the works of a divine power. Thus it is everywhere apparent that the miraculous activity of Christ had a peculiar, we might almost say a specific, import to the Fourth Evangelist. He found proof in it that Jesus, as the incarnate Logos, exercised a power that belonged distinctively to the divine character.

(2) Apart from direct works of miracle, certain attributes are ascribed to Jesus which point conclusively to His possession of the Logos nature. He partakes even in His earthly life of the omniscience of God. "He knew all men, and

needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man" (ii. 25). The secret of Nathanael's life was open to Him, although He looked upon him for the first time. He could tell the woman of Samaria "all things that ever she did." He was aware from a distance that Lazarus was sick, and at what time he died. As He is omniscient, so, in spite of the material limitations to which He has submitted Himself, He appears where He will with something of a divine omnipresence. He comes to His disciples walking on the sea. He makes Himself invisible, and so passes unharmed through the midst of His enemies (viii. 59). He presents Himself suddenly before the man whom He has restored to sight (ix. 35). Moreover, there is a majesty about His presence which quells and overawes. The officers sent by the Pharisees are afraid to touch Him (vii. 46). The Greeks, desirous to see Him, dare not approach Him except through the intervention of the disciples (xii. 21). The band of soldiers sent to arrest Him fall to the ground as if suddenly paralysed (xviii. 6). An impression is borne home to us, in every episode of the history, that while He tabernacled with men He was more than human,—that He was a heavenly being who could exercise at will the prerogatives of God.

(3) The aloofness of Jesus, as of one who belonged to a different world, is everywhere brought into strong relief by the Fourth Evangelist. In the Synoptic narratives, that which separates the Lord from other men is His matchless wisdom and serenity and moral purity. He mingles freely with

every kind of society; He shares the common sympathies, and enters into the common struggle, and all the while stands out as a man apart. The more He assimilates Himself to the ordinary life of men, the more He asserts the unique grandeur of His moral personality. John accounts for His difference from other men as a radical difference of nature. Belonging to a higher world, He cannot associate on equal terms with the people round about Him, and holds Himself aloof and solitary. In two respects more particularly the Synoptic record is vitally modified in the interest of this new conception. First, there is no allusion to any intercourse on the part of Jesus with publicans and sinners. Standing aloof from the world, He is furthest of all removed from the impure, unworthy elements in the world's society. Such communion as He has with men is with His own disciples or with those who are qualified to approach Him by their superior virtue and piety. As for the others the evangelist appears to hold with the blind man (ix. 31),—"We know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God and do His will, him He heareth." Again, the sympathy and compassion of Jesus, which are evident in every chapter of the Synoptic narratives, fall out of sight in the Fourth Gospel. We have seen that in the case of the miracles mere pity for human suffering ceases to be a prominent motive; and little stress is laid on it in the portrait of Jesus as a whole. He stands separate from the world in the majesty of His divine nature. He does not participate in

human weaknesses and distresses, and looks down upon them from a tranquil height at which they cannot reach Him. The famous verse (xi. 35), "Jesus wept," might seem for a moment to disturb this picture, but does so only in appearance. The feeling expressed in that verse is not human compassion, as of a man with his fellow-sufferers, but the sorrow of a divine being who stands apart and contemplates the earthly tragedy. The Jews misinterpret the tears as the sign of unavailing regret over a lost friend, but we are meant, in the light of the approaching miracle, to understand them better. They do not mark the humanity of Jesus, but rather His divine exaltation. From His own untroubled height He surveyed the misery of our mortal lot, and wept. So even in the intercourse of Jesus with His own disciples, His separateness is never forgotten. When He girds Himself to wash their feet at the Last Supper, He is conscious that He has come forth from God and returns to God (xiii. 3, 4). The example of humility and service depends for its power on the infinite condescension implied in it. This is true likewise of all the friendship of Jesus with His disciples, as it is set before us with a matchless beauty and tenderness in the Supper discourses. The friendship has begun with a marvellous condescension on the part of Christ, who admits to His very heart those who were rightly His servants (xvi. 15). The knowledge that He had stretched out His hand to them across a great gulf, and taken them to be His friends, was to be the motive henceforth of their adoring love.

(4) A still more remarkable feature in the Gospel is the emphasis laid on the absolute freedom, the self-determination of Jesus. The evangelist starts from the assumption that He who submitted Himself for a time to earthly limitations was possessed of a divine dignity. Even while submitting, He vindicated His authority by acting in everything on His own sovereign will, with no compulsion from without. In accordance with this view, the whole progression of events assumes a different character from that which it bears in the Synoptics. There is no indication of a change in the outlook or the programme of Jesus. The influence of outward circumstances is strictly excluded, so that there is no historical development, in the proper sense, at all. From the beginning, Jesus, as master of His own fate, has fixed His "hour," and Himself ordains all the conditions that will lead up to it. His enemies are powerless until the "hour" willed by Himself has come (vii. 30, viii. 20); and meanwhile He goes about His work in perfect security (xi. 9). Naturally, it is in connection with the death of Christ that the idea of His free self-determination is made most prominent. The chief stumbling-block to a belief in His divinity was the fact of the Cross, and John sets himself in his own fashion to remove the difficulty. He maintains that although Christ died for men, it was by His own consent, His own ordinance. "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again." "No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself" (x. 18). "Thou couldest

have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above" (xix. 11). But apart from the immediate references to the death, we can trace everywhere in the Gospel this same desire to assert the perfect freedom of Christ. He acts on His own initiative, and no counsels or suggestions from the outside have power to move Him [cf. His reply to His mother at Cana (ii. 4), and to His brethren before the feast of tabernacles (vii. 6)]. If He appears to seek advice from others on an occasion of difficulty, it is only to try their faith, "for He himself knew what He would do" (vi. 5, 6). His very emotions do not come over Him involuntarily [cf. the significant ἐτάραξεν ἑαυτόν (xi. 33)]. Other examples might be adduced from almost every page of the Gospel, for the whole picture of Jesus is dominated by this idea that He was never merely passive. He had come forth from the Father, and was come into the world (xvi. 28) in order to fulfil His self-appointed work. He ordered the events which seemed to human eyes to be coercing Him. In this well-marked strain of Johannine thought, we have little difficulty in discerning the influence of the Logos idea penetrating the actual reminiscence of the life of Christ. He who became flesh was not only allied to God by the glory of His moral nature, but partook of the divine essence. He was sovereign as God Himself was, and asserted His divine prerogative, in spite of the earthly conditions that seemed to constrain and limit Him.

(5) The Logos character of Jesus which is thus

illustrated on various sides by His actions, comes to clear expression in His spoken words. John attaches a peculiar value and significance to the words of Jesus, and the miracles themselves are subordinated to the words. A faith that demands signs and wonders is an inferior kind of faith, and Jesus asks to be accepted, not as a miracle-worker, but as the speaker of divine words. The words are the crowning proof of His higher origin, and they also possess in themselves a direct power and efficacy. "My words are spirit and life" (vi. 63); "Ye are clean through the word that I spake to you" (xv. 3), "Thou hast the words of eternal life" (vi. 68). Something else is implied in such references than a recognition of the supreme worth of our Lord's teaching, by which, even more than by His miracles, He approved Himself the true messenger of God. In the Johannine discourses the element of teaching is conspicuously absent. Little is said by way of ethical precept or even of spiritual illumination. The words are concerned almost wholly with the assertion, under many different types and forms, of the divine character of the speaker Himself. They express Christ's own self-consciousness of His relation to God, and His life-giving purpose towards men. This appears to be the reason why such a central place is assigned to them in John's presentation of the work of Jesus. They convey more clearly and emphatically than actions could do the inner secret of His personality, proclaiming Him to be one with the Father, the Light and Life of the world, the Bread which came

down from heaven. It is never said in definite terms, "I am the eternal Word," but this is the implied meaning of the discourses when we read them in connection with the prologue. They repeat with a fuller elaboration the great thesis from which the Gospel started, that in Jesus the divine nature became incarnate, and that He had power to impart the higher life because He was Himself one in essence with God. Indeed, it is not improbable that the insistence on the "words" of Jesus is bound up with the conception of Himself as Logos. The Word of God which had become incarnate in Him found utterance through His words, and they had therefore a mysterious value and efficacy. The divine nature imparted itself by means of them. They passed into the hearts of those who would receive them like the very breath of God, and were found to be spirit and life.

In all these directions, then, John gives effect to the idea of the prologue, that the nature of Christ was a Logos nature. The acceptance of this idea involves a wide departure from the traditional view of the life of Jesus. It becomes necessary to think of Him as a heavenly being, different in kind from the men around Him, and the facts of the Gospel history have to be adapted throughout to the new conception. Jesus as Logos was incapable of human weakness, and all traces of a moral struggle in His life, as in the stories of the Temptation and the Agony, are obliterated. He belonged to a higher world, and could not enter

into those familiar relations with men of which we have evidence in the earlier Gospels. Even His manner of speech required to be consonant to His divine dignity ; so that the parables disappear and the simple incisive sayings give place to vague and oracular utterances. In so far as the Synoptic narrative is followed, its incidents are consistently heightened in order to be more in keeping with the divine character of the Person. Although He lived on earth and conformed Himself in outward seeming to the limitations of our human lot, He was all the time the eternal Word.

There can be little doubt that by thus importing the doctrine of the Logos into the Gospel record, John is not only compelled to do violence to historical fact, but empties the life of Christ of much of its real worth and grandeur, while seeming to enhance it. The moral attributes, trust, pity, forgiveness, infinite sympathy, are replaced by certain metaphysical attributes, which are supposed to belong more essentially to the divine nature. Jesus is the revelation of God because He is the Logos, and exemplifies in His earthly life the absolute being and self-dependence of God. But this is to deprive the revelation of its true value. What men desire to know, and what was actually revealed to them through Christ, is the moral character of God, in His mercy and providence and Fatherhood. These are the Divine attributes in a far higher sense than any formal principles of being, and the Logos doctrine, by its very nature, can offer no account of them.

The attempt to construe the Person and work of Christ by means of a metaphysical theory was from the outset impracticable. If it had been carried out with any strictness and consistency, it would have destroyed the whole meaning of the Christian message. Instead of the real Person who has drawn all men unto Him, there would have remained only a philosophical abstraction, clothed with an apparent life, like a figure in an allegory. John does not press his identification of Jesus with the Logos to this full extent. Behind all his speculative thinking there is the remembrance of the actual life which had arrested him as it had done the first disciples, and been to him the true revelation of God. His worship is directed in the last resort not to the Logos, whom he discovers in Jesus, but to Jesus Himself. Nevertheless, the adoption of the Logos idea involves him in a mode of thought which is alien to his deeper religious instinct. On the one hand, he conceives of Jesus as manifesting God to men, and raising them to a higher life, by the might of His ethical personality. On the other hand, he is compelled to think of the revelation under metaphysical categories. Jesus was the Light of the world and the Life-giver, because He was Himself the Logos, one in essence with God. The Gospel wavers throughout between these two parallel interpretations of the life of Christ—that suggested by the history and that required by the Logos hypothesis. Superficially the two conceptions are blended together, but they are disparate in their nature and cannot be brought

into any real harmony. The doctrine of the Logos, born of philosophical theory, has nothing to do with the historical revelation in Jesus, and is wholly inadequate to explain it. It will become more and more apparent, as we examine the teaching of the Gospel, that the evangelist is working with two different views of the Christian message. He seeks to interpret, under the forms of the current philosophy, what has been given to him in the experience of faith.

CHAPTER VI

"THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD"

"THE Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." In this great thesis which marks the central idea of the prologue we have also a transition to the subject of the Gospel proper. The evangelist has effected his purpose of finding a ground for the nature of Christ within the divine being, and henceforth, while he assumes the Logos hypothesis, he does not revert to it in express terms. He recognises that the Word made flesh, manifest in a human personality, was not simply identical with the pre-existent Word. His religious instinct, moreover, is stronger than his metaphysic, and he feels the insufficiency of the bare Logos category to interpret the whole meaning of the revelation of God in Christ. So from this point onward the philosophical theory remains in the background, a powerful but secondary influence, and the nature of Jesus is defined by means of other conceptions more adequate to a personal and historical life.

There were three names by which, according to the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus was wont to express the significance of His Personality. He was the Christ, the Son of man, the Son of God. The

Fourth Evangelist takes up the Synoptic tradition, and accepts these three names as normative for his own theology. A century, however, had intervened since Jesus bore witness to Himself under these names, and in the meanwhile their original import had been partly forgotten, partly overlaid by theological reflection. John accepts them, not in the sense which they had conveyed to Jesus Himself, or to the first disciples, but in that which they had assumed, after various modifications, in the Church doctrine. Not only so, but the conception of the Logos reacts, as we have seen, on his view of the historical life, so that he reads it continually into the authentic self-witness of Jesus. The apparent identity of the names by which our Lord describes Himself in the earlier Gospels and in the later one, must not conceal from us the essential differences of thought.

It is necessary, first of all, to determine the Synoptic sense of these three titles,—Christ, Son of man, Son of God. The question is an obscure and difficult one, reaching back as it does into that problem of our Lord's self-consciousness which is in its nature insoluble. An approximate answer, however, will be sufficient for our present purpose of marking the difference between the view presented in the Synoptics and that of John.

(1) The name "Christ" is in the first instance national, and connects Jesus with the history and the hopes of Israel. He knew Himself as the Christ to be the final outcome of the religious de-

velopment of the Jewish people. He took on Himself the Messianic task of inaugurating that Kingdom of God which had been dimly prefigured in the ancient theocracy. In the mind of Jesus, however, the purely national significance of the title of "Messiah" was far transcended. The kingdom of God as He conceived it was a spiritual magnitude, and the name by which He expressed His relation to it assumed, therefore, an entirely new value. As the Christ He was the representative of a new moral order which had nothing to do with racial and political divisions. He had come to fulfil the theocratic ideal, not by restoring the kingdom to Israel, but by revealing the will of God and bringing all men into obedience to it. This contradiction between His own sense of the Messianic calling and the traditional conception, explains His reluctance to proclaim Himself as the Christ. He was conscious of the inadequacy of this title, which was yet imposed upon Him by the historical conditions under which He appeared. Before He finally adopted it He sought to transform its meaning, at least in the minds of His disciples. In the light of His own life and message they were taught to associate it with a new order of ideas—ethical and religious instead of political and national.

(2) It was only in the latter part of His ministry that Jesus declared Himself openly as the Christ. The name which He used most commonly while He was preparing His disciples for the Messianic proclamation, was that of Son of man. The

precise intention of this name is still one of the disputed questions of New Testament criticism, but the evidence would seem to point, almost conclusively, to its derivation from the passage in Daniel (vii. 13) which describes how, after the imperfect shapes, typifying the inferior kingdoms, there appeared in the prophet's vision "one like unto a Son of man." Already in Jewish Apocalyptic literature this mysterious figure of the "Son of man" had been identified with the Messiah. Indeed, the attempts which had thus far been made by Jewish thinkers to substitute a larger and more religious view of the Messiah for the crude popular view, had taken their main departure from this passage in Daniel. The Messiah was no mere King of the house of David, but an angelic being. He would come down from the heavenly world. He would appear in the last days on the clouds of heaven as the Judge appointed by God. In these speculations we have probably the key to the meaning of the name as employed by Jesus. Conscious of Himself as the Messiah, and yet desirous of assigning a higher connotation to the misleading title, He kept it in abeyance till near the close of His ministry, and replaced it by the other name of "Son of man." He thus transferred the emphasis from the merely national side of the Messianic idea to the religious side. As Son of man He had come forth from God in order to inaugurate a heavenly kingdom. He was possessed of a divine authority, in virtue of

which He would exercise judgment when He returned "in the clouds, with power and great glory." To the name "Son of man" as assumed by Jesus we cannot, indeed, ascribe the whole meaning which belonged to it in the current Apocalyptic literature. There is nothing to indicate that Jesus regarded Himself as an angelic being or laid claim to an eternal pre-existence. He adopted this title, like that of the Messiah, as a traditional form which partially corresponded with His own thought, and yet required to be re-interpreted before it could serve His purpose adequately. At the same time, it answered more closely to His conception of His Person and mission than the name "Messiah." It presented the Messianic idea in a purer form, and brought it into harmony with larger hopes and interests. By describing Himself, in the first instance, as the "Son of man," He was able to impress on the minds of His disciples the essentially spiritual nature of His vocation, so that the name "Messiah," when He finally claimed it, did not confuse or mislead them. It taught them to see in Jesus the fulfilment of ancient prophecy, while recognising also that He was much more. He had founded a kingdom which was not of this world. He had answered the hope of Israel, not in the manner anticipated, but far more fully and grandly.

(3) The third name by which Jesus is designated in the Synoptics is that of "Son of God." It is true that He does not Himself

claim the title, though He appears to do so by implication in at least one passage (Matt. xi. 27 = Lk. x. 22). Nothing, however, is more certain in the life of Jesus than that He was conscious of a special relation to God,—a relation of unique closeness and dearness which He could only describe as one of Sonship. The proof of this does not depend on isolated passages of perhaps doubtful authenticity, but is given us in our whole knowledge of His life and teaching. The story of the Gospel is simply unintelligible without this primary assumption that Jesus was conscious of a unique relation between Himself and God. This consciousness, by its very nature, does not admit of analysis. It was given to Jesus immediately, like the sense of His own personality, and He does not say how it came to Him or how He explained it to Himself. Indeed, so far as we can penetrate this central mystery of our Lord's life, He was conscious not so much of His own Sonship as of God's Fatherhood. He did not look inward on His own nature and seek to discover its ultimate origin and affinities, but forgot Himself entirely in the absorbing sense of God. It was left to later Christian reflection to draw out the full meaning implicit in the "Abba, Father" of Jesus, and emphasise the element of Sonship as well as that of Fatherhood. Thus in the Synoptic Gospels we have the seeming paradox that "Son of man" is the divine title on which Jesus bases His dignity and authority, while "Son of God" carries

with it no such claim. It simply expresses His personal relation to God, His self-surrender, in filial trust, to the higher will. He bases no prerogative on His Sonship to God. On the contrary, His absolute faith in God as His Father is the secret of His humility, His obedience, His Cross.

Turning now to the Fourth Gospel, we have these three Synoptic names presented to us with meanings entirely different. Here, as elsewhere, the evangelist reads back into the historical data his own characteristic ideas, so that under the familiar titles we have a new conception offered us of the Person and life of Jesus. (1) The name of "Christ" loses its special significance, and becomes simply an equivalent for "Son of God." It is true that the references to the Messianic title are somewhat complicated by the Jewish controversy, which runs as a subordinate motive through the Gospel. The claim of Jesus to be the Christ was naturally the crucial issue in all discussion with the Jews, and it was necessary to maintain the claim in its strict traditional sense. Jesus was the "King of the Jews," "He of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write" (i. 45). The objections put forward by the synagogue are dealt with, point by point, in a great controversial passage (vii. 26–53). But even in this passage the real aim of the writer is to interpret the Messianic idea in a higher and more spiritual sense. Jewish objections are not so

much answered as shown to be empty and trivial, and therefore thrown aside. The claim of Jesus to be the Messiah was not founded on descent from David, or birth in Bethlehem, or mystery in the mode of His appearance, or even on the strict fulfilment in His life of Old Testament prophecy (vii. 42, 27, 52). He was sent from God, and knew God; He had the water of life for all who were athirst; He spoke as no mere man could speak. So throughout the Gospel the Messianic title denotes nothing more definite than the higher nature and dignity of Jesus as the Son of God. It is still retained, in accordance with the consecrated tradition, but its meaning is entirely merged in that of the other title. "The Christ" and the "Son of God" are again and again co-ordinated as simply equivalent terms (xi. 27, xx. 31, i. 49). In this interpretation of the Messianic name by a higher and more comprehensive one, John gives effect, no doubt, to our Lord's own purpose. He also was conscious that the ancient title was not fully adequate, and sought to inform it with a new content before He claimed it. But it still retained its theocratic significance, marking His place in the new kingdom which was at hand. He never used it to express His peculiar relation to God, much less to convey a theological doctrine regarding His Person, such as we find in the Johannine idea of Sonship.

(2) In his use of the name "Son of man" John approximates more closely to the Synoptics. The

title, with its suggestion of a mystery and a unique dignity in the human life of Jesus, lent itself naturally to the Johannine conception, and is employed with much the same general effect as in the earlier Gospels. But a more careful analysis of the twelve passages in which the name occurs, discloses an essential modification in the meaning assigned to it. With the Synoptics it is an official name, by means of which Jesus brings into prominence a particular aspect of His Messiahship. He declares that although man, He is the heavenly man of the prophet's vision, who was entrusted by God with the inauguration of His kingdom and would one day appear in glory to judge the world. With John the import of the name is in a manner inverted. It has reference not to the higher claims of Jesus, but to the fact of His manhood. Although He was the Word, existing eternally with God, He was yet the Word made flesh, manifesting Himself under the conditions of human life. So in several passages the contrast is expressly marked between the present revelation of Jesus as Son of man and the true glory of His divine nature. "Hereafter ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (i. 51). "Ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before" (vi. 62). "The Son of man which is in heaven" (iii. 13). "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified" (xii. 23). "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him" (xiii. 31). The significance of

the name in all these verses lies in the suggestion that the human nature of Christ was united with a higher nature which was present in it even now, and would at last become fully manifest. He who appeared to be only the "Son of man" would be revealed in His true dignity as "Son of God." The same thought can be discerned in three striking passages which associate the "lifting up" of Christ with His coming to the world as "Son of man." The two ideas of death by the Cross and ascension to heaven are both conveyed in these allusions to the "lifting up," and the use of the name "Son of man" has thus a double suggestiveness. It implies, on the one hand, that by His suffering and death our Lord fulfilled to the uttermost the conditions of His human nature; while, on the other hand, "the Son of man was lifted up,"—passed out of His human limitations and re-entered on His state of glory. A similar pregnancy of meaning attaches to the name, in the passage where Jesus declares that "authority is given Him to execute judgment because He is the Son of man" (v. 27). He has said immediately before that He will summon men to judgment as "Son of God," but the thought suddenly changes, and assumes a deeper moral import. He who will judge men has Himself been man. His authority rests not merely on divine prerogative, but on His victory over temptation, His knowledge of human needs and weaknesses, His brotherhood with men. In verses such as this we touch the underlying thought which gives power and reality to the teaching of the

Fourth Gospel. The interpretation is more difficult in the saying which sums up the great eucharistic discourse: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you" (vi. 53). Here it might appear as if the name were used arbitrarily, or only to add a Synoptic colouring to words which in themselves have little in common with the recorded teaching of Jesus. But on closer examination we find that the allusion to the "Son of man" has a definite bearing on the prevailing idea of the passage. Jesus is speaking of His "flesh and blood,"—His human personality, through which He has come near to men. In order to communicate the divine life He has allied Himself to our humanity, and we are able to lay hold of Him on this human side of His revelation, and so receive His gift. Thus throughout the Gospel a consistent idea is traceable in the use of the title "Son of man." Its original meaning has fallen out of sight, and it denotes the acknowledgment on the part of Jesus of a human nature united with the divine. It brings to a point the implicit argument of the Gospel against those who had resolved the earthly history into a mere appearance. The Word had become flesh, had assumed the true attributes of manhood, though still remaining the Son of God.

(3) We come, then, to the name which belongs distinctively to Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, and determines the whole Johannine conception of His nature and work. He was the "Son of God," or more simply "the Son." In several places (i. 14,

18, iii. 16, 18) the name is further defined by the epithet "only-begotten," a Philonic epithet, which in John, however, bears an emphatic meaning. It serves to remove all doubt as to the unique character of the Sonship of Jesus. John, like the Synoptics, acknowledges a sense in which men have a filial relation to God (x. 35). He believes that Christ "has given power to as many as received Him to become the sons of God." But the relation of Christ Himself to God was different in kind from the Sonship attainable by men. He was the "only-begotten," the Son "who is in the bosom of the Father." It is at first sight not a little surprising that, holding this view of the unique Sonship of Jesus, the evangelist makes no allusion to the doctrine of the miraculous birth. From one passage (vi. 42) it might even be inferred that the doctrine is expressly controverted, although it would be rash to derive this conclusion from words assigned to the unbelieving Jews. The fact remains, however, that John passes over in silence the tradition of the Virgin Birth, which must certainly have been known to him, and which might seem to be in harmony with his own doctrine of the "only-begotten Son." In order to explain his silence, we must remember his strict exclusion of all that might imply a passivity in the divine Logos. It was by His own free act that the Son of God entered the world as man. The evangelist shrank from any theory of His origin that might impair the central idea of full activity, from the beginning of His work to the end. There was also another con-

sideration which must have weighed with him still more decisively. The current tradition of the birth of Christ seemed to cast a doubt on His pre-existent Sonship. It might appear as if He came into being as Son of God at a given moment of time by an act of the divine will; and thus the hypothesis of a miraculous birth, so far from supporting, might be so construed as to deny the doctrine of His essential divinity. It is therefore replaced by the theory set forth in the prologue, that the earthly life of Jesus was only the continuance of a Sonship which had subsisted from all eternity. "In the beginning the Word was with God." This to John was the fundamental truth concerning the Person of Christ, and he was careful not to confuse or obscure it by any attempt to combine it with the birth stories in Matthew and Luke. These are not, indeed, set aside. More probably they were accepted by John as a part of the orthodox tradition, in which, as a member of the Church, he acquiesced. But in view of his larger conception of the Sonship of Christ they had lost all doctrinal significance. It mattered little by what mode the Incarnation was accomplished, whether through ordinary generation or by way of miracle. For the relation of Christ to God did not depend on the birth in time. Already in the beginning he was "the only-begotten Son who was in the bosom of the Father"; and so He continued when He became flesh.

The conception of the Sonship of Jesus, as presented in the Synoptics, is not, however, to

be sought in the introductory narratives of the birth. We have seen that in the teaching which is preserved to us in those Gospels the emphasis is laid throughout on our Lord's inward sense of God's Fatherhood. He does not reflect on His own Sonship, and the supreme dignity and authority with which it invests Him, but only on the divine Fatherhood, with its demand upon Him for the complete surrender of His own will. The one grand exception is the passage Matt. xi. 27, Luke x. 22, where there appears to be a distinct claim to Sonship, based on the assurance of God's Fatherhood. But even allowing that this passage, which stands solitary in the Synoptic Gospels, has come down to us in its original form, it cannot be construed as a theological statement. Jesus, in a moment of exaltation, has realised with peculiar vividness that the Lord of heaven and earth is also His Father. He feels that no one before Him has so known God, that the fellowship between Himself and God, as close and real as that of Son and Father, is something altogether unique. The thought uppermost in His mind throughout is simply that God is inexpressibly near to Him, His Father whom He knows perfectly, and in whose power He can do all things. So this passage, singular as it undoubtedly is, does not necessarily clash with the uniform Synoptic witness as to the mode in which Jesus apprehended His relation to God. He did not begin with reflection on Himself, and thus from the knowledge of His Sonship infer God's Fatherhood. His mind was from first to

last possessed with the thought of God, to whom He surrendered Himself in entire obedience. In the Fourth Gospel the centre of gravity is shifted from the Fatherhood of God to the Sonship of Christ. Jesus is conscious, from the beginning, of His divine nature, and in virtue of this consciousness He reaches out to God and claims affinity with Him. His thought of the Father is only the other side of His own self-knowledge, and is derived from it and serves to illuminate and define it. This change of emphasis from the Fatherhood to the Sonship marks the crucial difference between the Johannine and the Synoptic interpretations of the mind of Christ.

The full significance of the change becomes apparent when we find it associated with an entirely new conception of the divine Sonship. In the Synoptics, so far as they reproduce our Lord's own teaching, the name "Father" as addressed to God does not imply a definite theological doctrine. God is "our Father" in the sense that He cares for us and demands our absolute trust. The closest of human relations helps us to realise, in some faint measure, the love and nearness of God. Jesus Himself is conscious of a fellowship with God so unique and profound that He can declare that "no man knoweth the Father but the Son," yet here also He uses language which is approximate, figurative. It expresses, however inadequately, His sense of a perfect communion with God and His entire obedience to the divine will. In the

Fourth Gospel the filial relation is taken literally as defining the nature of the fellowship between Jesus and God. The names "Father" and "Son" are worked out theologically in their whole implication. Jesus as the Son was of the same essence with God, had shared His glory before the world was, and even in His earthly life was mysteriously united with Him. In virtue of His Sonship He lays claim to a supreme status and dignity. He requires the obedience due to God, and exercises the divine prerogatives, and mediates to men the things given Him by His Father. All the ideas which are involved in literal sonship are now transferred to the mysterious relation subsisting between Jesus and His Father in heaven.

The doctrine of the Sonship of Christ as it thus appears in the Fourth Gospel was part of the inheritance which John had received from Paul. It is, indeed, sufficiently evident from the Pauline epistles that "Son of God" was already a recognised title of Jesus. The earliest Christian thought, it must be remembered, expressed itself in the moulds of Aramaic idiom, which employed the term "Son" in a large and vague sense. To describe Jesus as the "Son of God" was simply to acknowledge the divine character of His life and teaching. His disciples were conscious that He had brought God nearer to them, that the Spirit of God had rested on Him, and revealed itself through all His words and works. They summed up the undefined impression which His life had made on them in a name equally indefinite—"Son of God."

The idea of the Messiah as set forth in the Apocalyptic literature connected itself, at an early date, with the use of this name. Jesus as the "Son of God" was identified with the angelic being who was to appear from heaven in the last age and call the world to judgment. The prerogatives which He had Himself claimed as "Son of man" were supplemented by the transference to Him of all the attributes assigned to the Apocalyptic Messiah. As yet, however, this conception of Him was tempered by the historical reminiscence. It was reserved for Paul, who had never known Jesus in the flesh, and who approached Him with a mind saturated with Jewish-Apocalyptic speculation, to construe a doctrine, more or less definite, out of the name "Son of God."

According to the Pauline view, Jesus was the "Man from heaven,"—not a man only, but a being of higher nature who had descended out of the eternal world. Already in His pre-existent state He possessed a supreme dignity, and was "in the form of God" (Phil. ii. 6), "God's own Son" (Rom. viii. 32). This Sonship, veiled for a while during His earthly humiliation, was "declared with power by His resurrection from the dead" (Rom. i. 4). Paul thus accepted in its full extent the conception of the Messiah which had obtained currency in rabbinical thought, and transferred it to the historical Person of Jesus. "Son of God" was more to Him than a vague title of religious reverence. It connoted a theory of the heavenly origin of the man Jesus, of the glory He had

sacrificed, of the purport of His life and death and Resurrection. But with all this, it left the relation between Jesus and God entirely undefined. Although "Son of God" implies all that it does in Jewish-Apocalyptic thought, it implies no more. It only predicates of Jesus that He belonged to a heavenly order, that He was first in rank of the beings immediately near to God, not that He was identical in essence with God Himself. The question as to the ultimate relation of the Son to the Father is indeed foreign to the whole tenor of Paul's theology. His thought is everywhere determined by the religious and practical interest, and He deals with the problem of the Person only as it bears on the redeeming work. It was enough for faith to recognise in Jesus the heavenly Messiah, through whom God was reconciling the world unto Himself; all further inquiry into the nature of His affinities with God was futile speculation into which Paul refused to enter. The practical character of His thinking is made apparent in the cardinal verse (Rom. i. 4), where the Sonship of Christ is associated with the fact of His Resurrection. Here the apostle declares in effect that he does not concern himself with questions relating to the pre-existent Sonship. His knowledge of Jesus as the Son of God takes its starting-point from the Resurrection, and all the rest is of the nature of inference from that fact.

In the Fourth Gospel the Pauline doctrine is not only developed and made more consistent with itself, but is in several respects essentially modified.

(1) The idea of Sonship, which in Paul is carefully subordinated to a strict monotheism, is accepted in its full extent. In the generation succeeding Paul the name "Son of God" had gradually assumed the more definite meaning which the Greek language and forms of thought attached to it. The Fourth Evangelist employs it deliberately in the sense which it would convey to the ordinary Greek mind. Jesus as the Son was Himself of the same nature as the Father. All the divine powers and attributes devolved on Him in virtue of His inherent birthright as Son of God.

(2) The connection between the Sonship and the rising from the dead is discarded, along with the whole doctrine that the earthly life was an eclipse and humiliation. It was the risen Christ in whom Paul was able to recognise the divine glory. An act of divine power was necessary in order that Jesus might be restored to that status of Sonship which He had sacrificed by His appearance in the flesh. To John the Resurrection has no such central significance. It, indeed, marks a widening out in the activity of Christ, the beginning of a period when He would exercise His divine prerogative, unhampered by the earthly limitations to which He had for a while submitted Himself. But He had never ceased, or even appeared to cease, to be the Son of God. The dignity which Paul ascribes to Him in His exalted life belonged to Him likewise in His life on earth; and this, to the mind of John, constitutes the real meaning of the Gospel history. It was the manifestation, under

forms of space and time, of the glory of God, as reflected in His Son.

(3) The Sonship of Christ is brought into relation with the Logos theory, and so becomes capable of a more exact theological definition. To Paul, with his absolute monotheism, it was impossible to conceive of the divine Sonship in anything but a vague and half-figurative sense. Jesus was the "Man from heaven," "declared to be the Son of God," but there could be no thought of an actual division within the being of God. It was the adoption of the Logos hypothesis which allowed of a consistent working out of the literal idea of Sonship. In God Himself, according to the Alexandrian speculation, there was a second divine principle, one with Him in essence and yet distinct. To this eternal "Logos" Philo had already applied the name of "Son of God." The name in its Philonic sense was now transferred to Christ, and afforded a speculative basis for a fuller doctrine of His nature. He was the "Son of God," inasmuch as He was identical with the Logos, which had its ground in the depths of the divine being, and was itself θεός; the Fourth Gospel assumes that when Jesus spoke of God as "Father" He was directly conscious of this essential relation to Him. As the Logos who had proceeded from God, and was one with Him from eternity, He claimed to be the "Son."

A prominent place is given throughout the Gospel to the "witness" by which this claim of

Jesus has been confirmed. The different passages which describe the "witness" may be regarded as in the first place apologetic, and contain the evangelist's answer to current objections on the part of Jews and heathen. At the same time, they serve to elucidate his own positive conception of the Sonship of Christ.

(1) The first witness is that of John the Baptist, whose work consists, as we have seen, in his recognition of Jesus as the Son. The importance attached to John by his own party and by the Jewish people at large, lent value to his testimony. To the evangelist himself he was indubitably "a man sent from God," who spoke under the influence of God's Spirit and had means of knowledge beyond the reach of other men. Moreover, he was the representative of the ancient prophets, and in their name pointed to Jesus as the fulfilment of the hopes of Israel. The evangelist is careful, however, to assign a secondary place to the evidence of John. It could only carry conviction "for a season" to those who had directly felt the authority of the great prophet's message (v. 36). It was at best the witness of man, and no human word was sufficient to enforce belief in the mighty claim advanced by Jesus.

(2) In like manner the evidence of the Old Testament is not allowed the primary value which it possesses in the Synoptics and the writings of Paul. Jesus, indeed, speaks of the Scriptures as testifying everywhere to Himself, and several incidents in the narrative are illustrated by quota-

tions from Messianic prophecy. This line of proof is not, however, elaborated. It is even doubtful if the evangelist had any first-hand or complete acquaintance with the Old Testament. His allusions to it are comparatively few and of a somewhat perfunctory and superficial nature, dealing for the most part with passages which had obtained currency in the popular teaching of the Church. The Scriptures in any case are no longer the supreme authority which they were to the earlier Christian writers. John has advanced to a conception of the Person of Christ for which they can only afford him a vague and general evidence, and he seeks for his real proofs within the Gospel history itself.

(3) The "works" of Jesus are one convincing witness to His divine nature. These "works" are chiefly the miracles, which can only be accounted for on the supposition that He who wrought them partook of the creative activity of God. Hence the pre-eminent place which they occupy in the Gospel, and the endeavour to heighten them and remove every possibility of explaining them by reference to natural agency. But besides the miracles, the whole outward activity of Jesus is included under the idea of His "works." His life in all its manifestations was something more than human, and testified to a divine power residing in Him. In His conflict with the unbelieving Jews He points uniformly to His "works" as one plain and unsurmountable argument that He had come forth from God. "The works which the Father

hath given Me to finish bear witness of Me" (v. 36). "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not; but if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works" (x. 37, 38). "I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me" (x. 25). It is recognised at the same time that the faith elicited by the works is not the highest kind of faith. Jesus complains that the people will not believe Him except on the evidence of signs and wonders (iv. 48). He asks His disciples to believe "for the very works' sake" (xiv. 11), if their minds are indeed closed to the better testimony. The witness afforded by the works is external, and at most can only compel a grudging and unintelligent belief. Something more is needed before there can be an inward, whole-hearted conviction that Jesus is in truth the Son of God.

(4) Of more value, then, than the testimony of the works is the explicit witness that Jesus bears to Himself by His spoken words. He says, indeed, (v. 31), "If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true"; but this only implies that His self-witness does not stand alone. He speaks in the name of His Father, who will Himself confirm all that might seem incredible in His message. Elsewhere He declares (viii. 14), "Though I bear record of Myself, yet My record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go." His consciousness of Himself, in His relation of Sonship to God, is the one sufficing evidence. He alone could know the true mystery of His nature, and faith would demand

no other testimony than His bare word. The whole aim of the evangelist is to give such an impression of Jesus that His witness to Himself shall have the weight of immediate proof. Those sayings of His,—"I am the Light of the world," "I am the Bread of Life," "I am in the Father, and the Father in Me," are more than empty assertions. They have behind them the authority of the divine Person, who moves before us full of grace and truth, and express in clear words what we already feel about Him. He Himself, in His whole personality, is the true evidence and confirmation of His supreme claims.

(5) This witness of Jesus to Himself is supported by another witness; that which is borne to Him by the Father. "It is written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of Myself, and the Father that sent Me beareth witness of Me" (viii. 17, 18). This and similar passages are not to be interpreted as alluding to special voices from heaven (cf. i. 33, xii. 28), or even to the inward consciousness of Jesus that the Father acknowledged Him and was working through Him. The idea is rather that the power of Christ evidenced itself as a divine power. Those who were of the truth heard His voice. The instinct for God in the human heart responded to Jesus, recognised in Him the fullest and clearest manifestation of the divine. The same idea is expressed more plainly elsewhere in sayings which describe the believer as drawn to Christ by the agency of God Himself. "I have manifested Thy

name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me" (xvii. 6). "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto Me" (vi. 44, 45). The witness of God is in the last resort the immediate sense of a divine power apprehending us through Jesus Christ. Faith is conscious to itself that all it sought for in the Father is given to it in the Son.

These, then, are the main lines of evidence by which the claim of Jesus to divine Sonship is established; and different as they are in character, they seem all to converge on the one central fact. It becomes apparent, however, when we reflect a little on these various types of "witness," that their unanimity is only on the surface. The Sonship as proved by the miracles is something entirely different from the Sonship which evidences itself by the drawing of the soul to Christ. There are, in fact, two conceptions blended together in the mind of the evangelist,—one of them speculative and theological, the other purely religious. Intrinsically they have nothing in common, yet they are both connoted in the name "Son of God."

In the first place, the meaning of the name is determined by the Logos hypothesis. Jesus was the Son of God, inasmuch as He was the Incarnate Word, who already in His pre-existent state had been "towards God," and one with Him in essence.

This double relation of the Logos to God, indicated in the first verse of the prologue, is never lost sight of in the subsequent Gospel. Jesus as the Son is, on the one hand, the same in nature with the Father. He can lay claim to the attributes which belong peculiarly to God,—especially He shares with Him the fundamental divine attribute of self-existent life. "As the Father has life in Himself, so He hath given to the Son to have life in Himself" (v. 26). He can declare in plain words, "I and the Father are one"; "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." It is this identity of His nature with the divine nature that gives meaning to His work. By manifesting Himself He reveals God; by imparting His own life He enables men to participate in the life of God. Yet, on the other hand, the idea of Sonship involves a distinction, a subordination. As the Logos was "towards God," derived from Him and dependent on Him, so Jesus acknowledges that His relation to God is not one of absolute equality. "My Father is greater than I" (xiv. 28). "The Son can do nothing of Himself; but what things He seeth the Father do, these things doeth the Son likewise" (v. 19). "Whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak" (xii. 50). The Father has "sent" Him, has "given" Him His knowledge, His glory, His right of judgment, His essential life. This subordination of Jesus to God implies, as we shall presently see, an ethical moment, but in the first instance it is purely metaphysical. Philo had described the Logos as the "Son of God," in

order to indicate by an expressive metaphor its twofold relation to the absolute divine Being; and the Sonship of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel is construed in the Philonic sense. What was predicated of the abstract Logos is transferred to the historical Person, who becomes one with God, and all the while separate from Him and dependent. In the nature of things it was impossible to work out the conception with any approach to logical consistency. Predicates that are intelligible in the case of a metaphysical principle cease to have meaning when they are applied literally to a historical life. We cannot but feel that, in so far as he elaborates the Philonic idea of Sonship, John loses sight of the actual Jesus who is the subject of his Gospel. He is thinking not of the Word made flesh, but of the Logos as an abstract principle,—"towards" God, and yet one with Him.

On the one side, therefore, the Sonship of Christ is conceived theologically, in accordance with the presuppositions laid down in the prologue. But we miss the profounder import of the Gospel unless we recognise the presence of another and wholly different conception. The Fourth Evangelist, not less than the Synoptic writers, sets out from the fact of the historical life of Jesus. His speculative theories are nothing, in the last resort, but an attempt to explain in terms of reason his sense of a divine significance in the actual Person. That his faith in Jesus as the Son of God did not arise from mere doctrinal assumptions, is apparent from the nature of the "witness" by which he seeks to

vindicate it. His ultimate reliance, as we have seen, is on the self-evidence of the revelation in Christ. Jesus speaks to the believing heart with a voice that appeals to men as the voice of God Himself. He that hath seen Him hath seen the Father. Thus along with the theological idea of the Sonship, underlying and vitalising it, we have another idea which is derived immediately from the contemplation of the divine Person. Jesus by His life and character made God real to men, evinced a faith and love and obedience which spoke of a unique fellowship between Himself and God. The philosophical categories fall into the background, and the Sonship is regarded under moral and religious categories. "I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father that sent Me" (v. 30). "The Father hath not left Me alone, for I do always those things that please Him" (viii. 29). "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it again" (x. 17). "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not" (x. 37). In these and many similar passages the subordination of Jesus to the Father is no longer construed metaphysically. It becomes a personal attitude of love and obedience and self-surrender. Jesus bears witness that He is the Son of God, by living His life in unbroken fellowship with Him, by reflecting the divine character in His whole action and will. His relation to the Father is a filial relation in the full sense of the Synoptic teaching.

This other conception of the Sonship comes out

most clearly in John's interpretation of the death of Christ. To the strict Logos theory the Cross was a stumbling-block, and John fully realises the difficulty of finding a place for it within his theology. He has to emphasise the voluntary nature of the death, so that it becomes not a passive suffering, but an act, foreseen and planned and deliberately effected by the divine Son. He has to relate it to the glory and the larger life that were to follow, in such a way that the death itself melts into a passing episode. But all the time, hampered as he is by the exigencies of his Logos doctrine, he is awake to the supreme significance of the death, and feels that it was not a derogation from Christ's Sonship, but the crowning fact by which the Sonship was evidenced. On the Cross Jesus was "lifted up," and drew all men unto Him. In the depth of His seeming humiliation He came forth on the steps of Pilate's judgment-hall wearing the crown and the kingly robe (xix. 5). It is in glimpses like these that we become aware of the true underlying thought which finds imperfect expression in a theological system borrowed from the speculation of the age. John, like Paul, had been apprehended by Christ, mastered by the vision of that divine life which had revealed itself in its full grandeur upon the Cross. His faith was grounded ultimately not in any abstract hypothesis, but in his knowledge of the living Saviour, "who dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, as of the only-begotten of the Father."

To sum up, the Gospel presents the Sonship

of Christ under two aspects, which are radically distinct, although to appearance they are brought into harmony. There is first the metaphysical conception, reaching back to Philo and the Greek thinkers, by which the Sonship is defined in terms of the Logos doctrine. God existed from all eternity in fellowship with another being, one with Him in essence though subordinate, who is therefore called His "Son." This "second God" of Philonic speculation was manifested, according to our Gospel, in Jesus Christ. But the metaphysical conception is combined with another, which was derived immediately from the experience of faith. The evangelist had pondered on the life of Jesus, and had realised in his own heart His quickening and redeeming power. In this Saviour, who had satisfied his deepest longings and spoken to him with a divine authority, he recognised the Son of God. The name as employed by John covers both these conceptions, which belong in reality to different worlds of thought. His presentation of the life of Christ is thus involved from the outset in a certain confusion. The speculative theory can never be truly reconciled with the religious idea, and serves in the end to obscure, instead of illuminating and enhancing it.

CHAPTER VII

THE WORK OF CHRIST

THE theology of the Fourth Gospel may be regarded in the main as a development, along peculiar lines, of Paulinism; but there is one difference, evident on the surface, between the two types of doctrine. Paul concentrates himself, with an almost exclusive emphasis, on the death of Christ. Confronted on the one hand with the tremendous fact of sin, on the other hand with a holy law which judged men strictly according to their works, he had taken refuge in the grace of God revealed through the Cross. The work of Christ as he conceived it was all bound up with the redeeming death. In the Fourth Gospel the emphasis is shifted from the death to the life. Jesus is able to say at the last Supper, "I have *finished* the work which Thou gavest Me to do." His mission was already accomplished, and in the approaching death He would do no more than place His final seal upon it. The life, which to Paul was meaningless except as a necessary stage towards the Cross, has become all in all to the mind of John.

There are two considerations which serve in some measure to mitigate this broad difference

between the two thinkers. It needs always to be remembered, in the first place, that while Paul insists on the death of Christ, he views it as much more than an isolated fact. The Cross is to him the supreme expression of the whole mind of Christ. All that Jesus had done and taught, all that He was in His sovereign personality, could be discerned in His death, so clearly and sufficingly that knowledge of the life was hardly necessary. If Paul refused to "know Christ after the flesh," it was not that he was blind to the value of the earthly ministry, or centred his faith in a dogma rather than in a living Person. The death, as he regarded it, was the life in its ultimate purpose and meaning. To know Christ crucified was to enter into the inmost spirit of Jesus, and all other knowledge of Him was external and inadequate. Nothing is more certain than that Paul, by his exclusive contemplation of the death of Christ, was the first to grasp the deeper significance of the Gospel history. He prepared the way for a truer, more vital conception of the Saviour's life than had yet disclosed itself to His own immediate disciples. The aim of the Fourth Evangelist is to go back upon the life with that profounder insight into its meaning which the Pauline doctrine of the Cross had now made possible. Paul dwells upon the fact of the death as illuminating the inner purpose of the life, while John reverts to the life and finds that it anticipated, in its every detail, the crowning revelation. Regarded in this light, the contrast between the two writers becomes more apparent

than real. The work of John presupposes that of Paul, and forms its necessary outcome and complement.

In the second place, the doctrinal import of the death of Christ is largely absorbed by John into his conception of a descent of the eternal Logos. He does not, it is true, regard the earthly life of Jesus as a humiliation. It was rather an infinite condescension on the part of one who had come from God and went to God, and had been entrusted with all things by the Father (xiii. 3). But for this very reason, that Jesus still retained His divine character while assuming outwardly the form of a servant, His appearance in the flesh constituted His sacrifice. The death at the close could not add to it anything that was essential. Beside the transcendent fact that the Son of God became flesh, and entered for a while into this lower world, all else was secondary. Thus in the Johannine view the life as a whole occupies the place which Paul assigned to the death. There are elements in Paul's doctrine — vital elements—for which the evangelist can find no room, and which he is content to leave entirely to a side. But he accepts the fundamental idea of a redeeming sacrifice, with the difference that he connects it with the Incarnation instead of with the death. He does not break away from Paul's Gospel of the Cross, but assimilates it, under other forms, to his own conception.

It might appear that in identifying the work of Christ with the life rather than the death, John reverts from the Pauline to the Synoptic tradition.

Like the writers of the earlier Gospels, he seeks to infer the purpose of Christ's coming from a study of the actual history. He brings the fact of the Cross into its due relation to the events which had preceded and partially explained it. But the similarity of method covers a difference which is in reality much greater than that which separates him from Paul. To the Synoptic writers the work of Jesus consists in His teaching and activity. He appears as the Founder of the kingdom of God, as the originator of a new moral law, as the standard and example of the life of faith. It is assumed that the work which manifestly occupied Him during the time of His earthly ministry was His real and essential work. John, however, approaches the life of Christ with a sense of the infinite significance which had been disclosed in it by the after history. Jesus in his divine Person could not be represented fully by anything He had actually said or done. The apparent work served only to adumbrate under the form of "earthly things" the real work which the Son had accomplished for His Father. The aim of the evangelist is so to present the life of Jesus that we may learn to understand it in its deeper meaning and purpose. In the light afforded him by Paul, by Philo, by the history of the Church, most of all by his own religious experience, he sifts the literal tradition in order to discover the real import of the work of Christ.

(1) He takes his departure from the indubitable fact that Jesus had been the medium of a new

revelation. This was the primary character of the Christian Gospel, that it professed to be a message from God, conveying a more perfect knowledge of His mind and will. How was it, then, that this revelation had been imparted by Christ? The Synoptic writers had been content simply to record the sayings and parables in which Jesus had spoken of God, of His eternal love and pity, of His nearness to those who trust Him. Paul had dwelt not so much on the spoken words of Christ as on His supreme act of self-surrender. The Cross, by which God had commended His love to us while we were yet sinners, had been the revelation. To the Fourth Evangelist these two accounts seem both inadequate. Jesus in His own Person was the revelation of God. His work consisted, when all was said, in the mere fact that He manifested Himself, showing forth the glory of the invisible God in His human life. The answer to Philip at the Supper may be regarded as the central theme of the whole Gospel. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"; Jesus Himself is the revelation, and according as men know Him, through a living fellowship, they attain to the knowledge of God.

Not only does Jesus in His own Person reveal God, but He is the absolute revelation. There can be little doubt that we have here the chief practical motive that determined the evangelist in his adoption of the Logos category. He sought to establish the claim of Christianity to be the absolute religion, in which God had revealed Himself to men once

and for ever. Jesus Christ was not merely a prophet who had come to bear witness of the Light, but was Himself the Light. The self-revealing principle in the divine nature had become incarnate in Him, so that no advance beyond His message was conceivable. This is the idea which underlies the prologue, and comes to definite expression in its closing verses. The manifestation of God in Christ is contrasted with the earlier manifestations, and shown to be different, not only in degree but in kind. God had revealed Himself in human reason and conscience as a "light that lighteth every man"; He had spoken through Moses in His law; He had sent His servant John the Baptist, the greatest representative of the long line of prophets. Through all these imperfect media the world had attained to some dim knowledge of God, who is Himself invisible. But every other revelation has now been superseded. "The only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father," admitted to God's inmost counsels and participating in His very nature,—"He hath declared Him."

The revelation consists, then, in the vision of His own Person which Jesus affords to the world. It is remarkable that the Fourth Gospel contains almost nothing of positive teaching in regard to the nature and character of God. The simple Synoptic sayings which dwell on God's goodness and providence and Fatherhood, impart a knowledge of Him infinitely fuller and clearer than any words recorded by John. But the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel does not require to speak concerning God,

since He is Himself the Word, the Son in whom the Father is manifest. His one aim is to concentrate the world's attention on His own Person, for God Himself is revealed in Him.

The conception of Jesus as Himself the revelation is determined, in the first place, by the Logos theory. Those who have seen Him have seen the Father, inasmuch as He has come forth from God and is one with Him in His essential nature. The appearance of Jesus is in this sense a real theophany,—a self-manifestation of God under the conditions of space and time. John is so far in sympathy with the Greek-philosophical mode of thinking, that he attaches a vital importance to knowledge on its purely intellectual side. It was necessary to the redemptive process that the higher reality should become intelligible to human reason, and this had been precluded hitherto by the eternal separation between God and the world. But in Christ the divine nature had come within the sphere of the visible and knowable. To contemplate Him was to apprehend the "truth,"—the absolute divine Being. In so far as he grounds himself on the Logos hypothesis, John conceives of the revelation in this abstract metaphysical sense. It was simply the exhibition of divine as opposed to earthly and phenomenal being, and no ethical content could be ascribed to it.

But the idea of revelation is construed by John in the light of other categories than those of philosophical theory. The doctrine of the Logos, it cannot be too often repeated, is only the form by

which the writer endeavours to interpret in terms of reason his religious experience. By his contemplation of the life of Jesus, by his inward fellowship with Him, he had won for himself a new knowledge of God. This was not a knowledge of God's essential being, but of His will and character. Jesus had reflected in Himself the divine love and goodness. Through His own assurance of God's Fatherhood He had given to His disciples also the spirit of adoption. We are conscious, as we read the Fourth Gospel, that this sense of a moral revelation of God in Christ has preceded the theological reflection, and is the vitalising power behind it. The Word made flesh would be an unreal shadowy figure, if it were not for the reminiscence of the historical Jesus which lies continually in the background. He by His obedience to the Father's will, by His infinite love and sacrifice, had made God real to men, and enabled them to know and trust Him.

(2) The Gospel lays a special emphasis on the significance of Jesus as the world's Judge. Already in the Synoptics this aspect of the Lord's work is made prominent, in connection with the Apocalyptic view of the kingdom of God. The Son of man will receive power from God to judge mankind; He will call the nations before Him, and separate the sheep from the goats. The notion of a judgment was a traditional element in the Messianic hope, and since it could not be reconciled with the historical life of Jesus, it was carried forward into the future. So in the Book of Revelation the exalted Christ is, above

all, the Judge, who executes the doom pronounced on the sinful world. Even Paul is faithful, though in a less marked degree, to the primitive Christian tradition; and anticipates a day when "we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ" (2 Cor. v. 10). The Fourth Evangelist accepts the doctrine of a Messianic judgment, which he thus found current in the Church, and gives it a new development in line with his characteristic ideas. The judgment is taken out of the future, and carried back into the actual life of Christ. While He lived on earth He was already endowed with all the prerogatives of the Son of God; and one chief purpose of His coming was to judge men, in virtue of that sovereign power which the Father had entrusted to His hands. Here, however, we are met with one of those apparent contradictions which form a constant difficulty in the interpretation of this Gospel. In certain passages Jesus seems expressly to renounce His right of judgment. "If any man hear My words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (xii. 47). "Think not that I will accuse you to the Father" (v, 45). "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (iii. 17). Beside such passages, and sometimes almost in the same breath, we have others of quite a contrary tenor. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son" (v. 22). "He hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man" (v. 27). "Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no

man. And yet if I judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me" (viii. 15, 16). "For judgment I am come into the world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind" (ix. 39). "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (xii. 31). These two classes of passages appear to be mutually contradictory, and yet they can not only be reconciled, but serve to elucidate each other. Christ does not pass formal judgment upon men; it is enough that He has revealed Himself, and given them the opportunity of declaring their attitude towards Him. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men loved the darkness rather than the light" (iii. 19). The judgment is on His part involuntary, for His whole desire is to draw men unto Him and save them. But none the less it is a real judgment. The fact of His appearance is the all-important issue which compels men to assert themselves in their true natures. It needs to be observed that this judgment is not, in the first instance, an ethical one. Rather it connects itself with John's semi-Gnostic distinction of two great classes in the human race,—those who are from above and those from below,—children of light and children of darkness. The work of Christ was to sift out, as by a magnet, the purer element in mankind from the lower and grosser. Already in the prologue this thought becomes prominent (i. 12, 13), and it constitutes one of the chief motives in the Gospel as a whole. The old conception of the final judgment

is replaced by the different conception of a present and continual action of Christ. The light has come into the world, and makes itself felt in men with an attractive or a repellent power, according to the nature that is in them. Hitherto they had been mingled together in the confused mass of humanity, but Christ effects a separation, and gathers "His own" out of the unbelieving world. He is the Son of God, and as men choose for Him or against Him they are judged; they reveal themselves either as children of light or children of darkness.

While he thus transforms the primitive idea of judgment, making it present and inward instead of future and dramatic, John appears in certain places to approximate to the Synoptic view. "The hour cometh in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of condemnation" (v. 28, 29). "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (xii. 48). It is impossible to reconcile such utterances with the view of judgment which we must regard as the distinctive Johannine view. They only serve to remind us that John, with all his originality of thought, was still partly bound to the past. Along with his own conception he strove to make room for the belief that had impressed itself on the Church at large, of which he was a member. In this instance, as in many others that will fall to be considered, he found elements in the current theology which were not wholly tractable to his method of re-interpretation,

and instead of discarding them he simply incorporated them as they were. Their presence must be acknowledged, but it need not confuse us in our estimate of his own characteristic thought.

(3) We pass now to the positive Johannine conception of the saving work of Christ. The judgment, as Jesus Himself declares, is subordinate to the real task assigned to Him by the Father, of "saving the world" (xii. 47). It is here that the divergence of the Johannine from the Pauline type of doctrine appears at its widest. The work of salvation, as Paul conceived it, had little meaning apart from the fact of sin. It was the futile struggle with the law of sin in his members which had brought Paul to his faith in Christ, and his whole theology is an attempt to explain the deliverance assured to him by that faith. Christ was his Saviour, the Saviour of the world, because of the atoning death which had broken the power of sin. In this view of the Christian Gospel Paul is radically at one with the Synoptists. It is true that they offer a different account of the method of Christ's work, but they have no doubt regarding its purpose. The emphasis is always on the relation of Jesus to the sinner. He came to seek and save that which was lost. By the might of His divine personality he lifted men and women out of their evil lives, out of their despairing sense of moral impotence, and gave them the certainty of God's forgiveness. In the Fourth Gospel this side of Christ's activity almost disappears. The

beautiful fragment of the woman taken in adultery (viii. 1–11) is certainly interpolated from another source, and with this exception the Gospel affords no parallel to the Synoptic records of the intercourse of Jesus with publicans and sinners. It represents Him rather as keeping strictly aloof from the sinful world. The children of darkness instinctively avoid the light, and those only draw to Him who possess the inborn predisposition towards the things of God. "We know that God heareth not sinners" (ix. 31) expresses an axiom which the evangelist appears to accept as self-evident. The message of Jesus could only be to "His own," who were capable of knowing and believing Him; and to the outside world of sin His attitude was one of judgment.

The saving work of Christ, according to the Johannine conception, does not consist in the deliverance from sin. Before inquiring, however, into the positive meaning ascribed to it, it is necessary to determine how the Gospel deals with the problem of sin, the problem which was cardinal to earlier Christian thought. It was impossible for John simply to pass it over. He wrote for a Church in which the influence of Pauline ideas was still powerful. He was recording the life of Jesus, and could not wholly dissociate it from a message of forgiveness and atonement. The fact of sin ceases to be the dominant fact in his theology, but here and there he recognises it and makes some partial attempt to connect it with his own doctrine of the work of Christ.

Little importance can be attached to a text

which might appear at first sight to be decisive,—the saying of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (i. 29). Here, it is fairly certain, we have nothing but a vague concession to the earlier doctrine. Against the single text in which Christ is regarded as the great sacrifice for sin, we have to set the whole Gospel, which not only leaves this idea to a side, but moves in a world of thought quite alien to it. This will become more evident when we consider the place assigned by John to the death of Christ. If the doctrine implied in the text were of vital significance to him, it would certainly reappear in some emphatic form when he comes to contemplate the death. In point of fact, it is only hinted at under a vague symbolic allusion. Several explanations are offered of the mystery of the Cross, but that which had been regarded hitherto as the one sufficing explanation falls practically out of sight.

A more important passage occurs in one of the great controversial chapters (viii. 34–36): "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth for ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Here the evangelist repeats, in somewhat perfunctory fashion, a thought and image borrowed from Paul; but even while he does so he superimposes his own ideas on the Pauline groundwork. Sin is conceived not as a positive principle, but as a privation, a limitation. The sinner is in the position of a

servant who does not have free access to the Father's house, but the Son admits him to His own privileges. The deliverance from sin consists, so to speak, in the opening of a door that has hitherto been closed. To the mind of John, therefore, sin in itself involves no moral culpability. It was only after the coming of Christ that men became themselves responsible for remaining in the outward darkness when the way of freedom was open to them. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin" (xv. 22). The Spirit will convict men of sin, "because they believe not on Me" (xvi. 9). Sin is in itself a mere privation, and only assumes the darker character when the freedom offered through Christ is refused. There can be no deliverance from sin, in the Pauline sense; for the real sin which merits condemnation is nothing else than disbelief in Christ.

The dialogue with Nicodemus in the third chapter brings us nearer than any other passage to the true Johannine doctrine of sin. The account there given of the New Birth might seem at first sight to imply the full Pauline conception of a breach with the old sinful life, made possible by faith in Christ. A Pauline influence is certainly traceable in the thought and even in the language of the chapter; but it will become apparent, in the course of our inquiry, that the doctrine of the New Birth rests on presuppositions wholly different from those of Paul. The birth does not consist in a renewal of the moral nature, but in a transition from the natural state of being to a higher state.

Man by nature is shut out from the true life, is incapable of the higher knowledge and activity. Like the dwellers in Plato's cave (and the analogy, in view of John's relation to Greek thought, is more than accidental), he remains in a world of illusion until he is set free and "born from above" into the true world of light. Moral ideas do not, at least primarily, have any part in the conception. Doubtless it is implied that in the illumination of the new life a region of higher moral activities is opened up to the believer, but this is not the immediate import of the doctrine. The birth is a deliverance from sin, only in so far as sin is regarded as an exclusion, a darkness in which man by nature finds himself. So in the great verse that crowns the discourse, "God so loved the world," etc., the idea is not that of a redemption from sin, but that of a passing from the state of privation to fulness of life.

Thus the doctrine of sin, in the sense that it meets us elsewhere in the New Testament, is almost wholly absent from the Fourth Gospel. As a central doctrine of primitive Christianity it cannot be entirely set aside, and once or twice is recognised by a passing allusion. But the conception of sin which enters into the essential structure of John's theology has little in common with the earlier conception. The "sin" from which Christ has offered us deliverance is the natural incapacity of man to possess himself of the higher life. He is separated from God, not by a principle of moral evil which has won mastery over him, but by the

inherent constitution of his being, as a creature of this world, "born of flesh."

We are now in a position to understand the meaning which John attaches to the saving work of Christ. He takes his departure not from the fact of sin, but from the essential difference assumed to subsist between the lower and the higher nature. Man as an earthly being has no part in the life of God. The life he possesses is more truly "death" (v. 24), subject as it is to decay and limitation, and immersed in a world of unreality. The purpose of Christ's coming was "to give power to as many as received Him to become the sons of God" (i. 12). He came out Himself from the higher world, and was one in nature with His Father, and through Him the life was imparted to men. They were enabled to escape from the world of darkness, and to enter into true communion with God. In later chapters we shall inquire more fully into this conception of Christ as the Life-giver, which, according to John's own statement, forms the central motive of his Gospel (xx. 31). We shall see that the various elements of his thought, on its ethical and religious as well as on its philosophical side, are gathered together in this conception, and must be explained in their relation to it. For the present it will be enough to bear in mind the fact that the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel is above all the Life-giver. His saving work has reference not to man's sinfulness, but to man's inferior nature, which longs to participate in the true and eternal life.

We have thus considered the three main aspects under which John regards the work of Christ. As Son of God He was the Revealer, the Judge of mankind, the Life-giver. It will be observed that all this time the whole emphasis is laid on the appearance of Christ in the flesh. Already in the years of His earthly ministry He had put forth His entire activity and could say before the close: "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." The question now arises, "What is the significance attributed by John to the death of Christ?" The event is recorded in detail, as by the other evangelists, and allusion is made to it constantly in terms the most impressive. To John, as to Paul, although for different reasons, the Cross had evidently an all-important place in the Saviour's work.

It is necessary at the outset to take account of one remarkable fact in his narrative of the fact itself. As is well known, he ante-dates the Crucifixion by a day. The Supper, as he describes it, took place on the 13th Nisan, instead of on the 14th, as in the Synoptics, while the death is assigned to the day following. In the Fourth Gospel, where outward facts are all invested with a symbolical value, this deviation from the unanimous testimony of tradition cannot be regarded as accidental. The evangelist was possibly influenced by a desire to dissociate the Christian sacrament from the Jewish Feast of the Passover. He guards himself doubly against this identification by ante-dating the last Supper, and by representing

it as the prototype of the Agape rather than of the Eucharist. Thus the great Christian ordinance is left entirely free of Passover associations. Its institution is not ascribed to one particular occasion, but is connected broadly with the whole activity and teaching of Jesus (vi. 32 ff.). In view of the Jewish polemic which pervades the Gospel, this explanation of the change of date appears more probable than that which would refer it to the so-called Paschal controversy. There is no evidence that this later controversy regarding the true date of Easter had begun to agitate the Church so early as the beginning of the second century; and in any case the view maintained by John is quite apart from the real point in dispute.

The sacramental interest, however, though it may well have weighed with the evangelist, was a side-issue. To him, as to us, the important fact must have been that the date of the Crucifixion itself was altered. It was made to coincide with the killing of the Paschal lamb, and so to fulfil the prophecy and realise the symbolism of the ancient ordinance. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. v. 7). In this indirect way, therefore, John sets himself in line with the Pauline view of the death of Christ, suggesting it, as it were, in the background, as the complement and the presupposition of his own doctrine. The thought of Jesus as the Lamb of God, of His death as the great Atonement, had rooted itself in Christian faith, and demanded some place in the new presentation. But John is conscious that it does

not harmonise with his conception as a whole, and satisfies himself with this vague indication of it by means of symbolism. The Pauline doctrine, indeed, is bound up with ideas that belong to a different world of thought from that in which the Gospel moves. The Jewish law, which to Paul, even while he broke with it, remained holy and dominated his entire theology, was to John a dead letter. The problem of sin, which was central in the mind of Paul, to John appeared something secondary. In the true Johannine doctrine there is no logical place for the view of the death of Christ as an Atonement. So far as that view seems to be accepted, we have to do, not with John's characteristic teaching, but with the orthodox faith of the Church, which he strove to incorporate with his own at the cost of an inner contradiction.

Another aspect of the death of Christ which is touched on without further elaboration is that indicated in the difficult verse of the intercessory prayer (xvii. 19). "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." We seem here to have an approximation to the type of doctrine which is elaborated in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Christ is the "truth," the reality, of the old symbolical sacrifices, and His death ensures a true consecration. He "sanctifies Himself," assumes the double part of a victim and a high priest. It is evident that the word ἁγιάζειν, as applied first to Christ and then to His followers, is used in two different senses,

answering to the twofold use of our word "consecrate." The Saviour on His part devotes Himself to death, in order that the disciples may be rendered holy, set apart for the service of God. His death is thus regarded under the figure of a sacrifice, and as such a real efficacy is ascribed to it. But there is nothing in the verse that implies the idea of an atoning death, as that was understood by Paul. The emphasis is laid on the "consecration," the separateness from the world, which was the mark of Christ's disciples. They, like their Master, have part in the higher life, and are not of the world, as He is not of the world. In this verse alone the consecration is directly related to the death of Christ, probably through the influence of a doctrine akin to that of Hebrews, which cannot be fully reconciled to the Johannine doctrine proper. At the same time, it is capable of a certain adjustment to the view represented by the Gospel. The death of Christ is the crowning act by which His work is perfected and becomes operative on those who believe in Him. It may be regarded, in this sense, as the efficient cause of their sanctification.

We have little difficulty in separating the evangelist's own interpretation of the death of Christ from those others, more or less extraneous, with which he seeks to combine it. He regards the true work of Christ as consisting in his life as a whole; and the death, from this point of view, is only an episode in the life. It crowns

the revelation, and brings out certain aspects of it more clearly and definitely, but does not add any new element to the completed work. Nevertheless it has a place of central significance, as connecting the earthly life of Jesus with His larger life in the unseen world. The Word had become flesh, for only thus could the divine nature communicate itself to men, but the manifestation under forms of space and time had involved restriction. The Son of God could not exercise His complete activity; He could make His appeal only to those who were actually near Him; His intercourse even with them was external and interrupted. It was necessary that the visible life on earth should broaden out into a larger life, free from the limitations which had hitherto been imposed upon it; and this, according to the Fourth Gospel, was the purpose of the death. In itself it was a seeming derogation from the majesty of Christ, but He embraced it of His own will and associated it with the fact of His "glory." It loses its character as a suffering and humiliation, and becomes the act of transition from the earthly, restricted life to the exalted life.

In the first place, it marks the return of Jesus to the Father, His reinvestment with the glory which He had in the beginning. This return is conceived as something more than a simple reversion to His pre-existent Logos nature. He takes back with Him into His state of glory the human personality which He has borne on earth. He retains His

sympathy with His people, and continues His saving work, unimpeded henceforth by earthly restraints. In the second place, the death prepares the way for a return of Jesus to His disciples. While He enters into His heavenly glory He is still regarded as dwelling in our world, revealing Himself to His Church in all times and places as He had once been revealed to His immediate followers. The earthly life as John describes it was the prefigurement and microcosm of this wider life. Its various incidents have all an abiding significance, as typifying what Christ is still doing, now that He has become a universal presence instead of a visible person, hedged about with human conditions. His death was like the gateway through which He passed into this larger life. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw *all* men unto Me" (xii. 32). "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit" (xii. 24). The death of Christ was therefore the necessary prelude to the rise and extension of the Christian Church. Already in the Lord's lifetime the Church existed potentially in the little company of the disciples, but it could not develop itself in its true character, of a world-wide community bound together in fellowship with Christ, until He was glorified. Only then could He be present with His people everywhere, and make them partakers in the eternal life.

He was set free by His death, not only for a wider but for a more intimate and deep-reaching

activity. The bodily presence which seemed to bring Him so near to the original disciples, was in reality a barrier to the truer knowledge. Those who were associated with Him in His earthly life could only know Him outwardly. The veil of flesh under which they beheld Him served to conceal from them His real nature. Their fellowship with Him was partial, restricted, liable to interruption by every passing accident. When through death He passed into the unseen world, He could dwell with the believer as spirit with spirit. He could enter into the very heart and reveal Himself as an inward presence, and speak His message in a new and more personal language to everyone that loved Him. A special turn is given to this thought by the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, which holds a conspicuous place in the Supper discourses. Without entering at present into the full bearings of this doctrine, we require to note its close dependence on the Johannine view of the death of Christ. "The Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified (vii. 39). "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you" (xvi. 7). The same thought is prominent in all the passages in which the doctrine of the Spirit is set forth. Jesus makes it clear that His dying is the one condition on which His supreme gift can be bestowed. He speaks, indeed, as if the bestowal of this gift, through which alone the closer and deeper knowledge of Him would become possible, were the chief purpose of His death.

This, then, is the characteristic Johannine idea of the Cross,—that Jesus by His death escaped from the restrictions in which the assumption of a visible earthly life had involved Him. He was enabled to pursue His work with a larger power on an infinitely wider scale. One application of the idea demands a further emphasis, for the evangelist comes back to it repeatedly. The death of Christ prepared the way for a world-wide extension of the Church; and not only so, but it ensured the unity of this great body of believers, in spite of outward differences and separations. This thought is stated most explicitly in connection with the speech of Caiaphas. The high priest, moved unconsciously by a divine inspiration, declares that one man must die for the people; "and not for that nation only," adds the evangelist, "but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad' (xi. 52). It is noticeable in this passage that John expressly departs from the idea of vicarious sacrifice which might seem to be conveyed in the significant words of Caiaphas. He substitutes for it the other idea, that the Cross would be the loadstar of "all the children of God,"—would attract into one community all who were destined, by an inward predisposition, to share in the divine life. The same thought is clearly indicated in the parable of the Good Shepherd. "I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold, one Shepherd" (x. 15, 16). Here also the death of

Jesus is regarded as the grand condition of the Church's unity. The "one fold" gathered out of all the nations cannot come into existence until the Shepherd has laid down His life. Once again, it is this thought of the uniting power of the Saviour's death which underlies the intercessory prayer and constitutes its chief meaning. The oneness of His future Church for which Jesus prays the Father is not, indeed, related in so many words to the fact of the Cross; but we have to consider the whole prayer as a solemn introduction to the narrative that immediately follows. Jesus on the threshold of His death thinks of the results that will flow from it,—the widening out of His Church, the fuller consecration, the more perfect unity. "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us" (xvii. 21). John nowhere attempts to reason out this conception of the Cross of Christ as the bond of unity in the Christian Church. It is connected, no doubt, with the larger doctrine that Christ by His death had become an all-pervading presence, with whom the disciples, scattered as they were through many different lands, might hold a common fellowship. But an efficacy is also ascribed to the fact of the death itself. John recognises, like the writer to the Ephesians, that "those who aforetime were far off have been made nigh by the blood of Christ; for He is our peace, who hath made both one, and broken down the middle wall of partition" (Eph. ii. 13, 14). This idea is not established, as in the Epistle, on the ground of Pauline doctrine. It seems rather to be

accepted as a simple fact which had demonstrated itself practically in the history of the Christian Church. The Cross of Christ had touched the common heart of humanity. It had wakened a new sense of brotherhood in men of all classes and nationalities, so that henceforth in their deepest interests they were one.

The death of Christ, so far as it has a separate value, is thus regarded as the condition of the Lord's glory, and of the expansion and unity of His Church. Otherwise it stands in close relation with the whole life, of which it was the crowning episode. In the parable of the Good Shepherd, Jesus makes allusion to His death as the supreme evidence of his faithfulness in His vocation. A true shepherd, unlike a hireling, gives his life for the sheep; so Jesus proves Himself worthy of His trust by remaining till death at the post of duty. Elsewhere, and especially in the Supper discourses, the Cross is the sovereign manifestation of Christ's love to His disciples. "Having loved His own, He loved them to the end" (xiii. 1). "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (xv. 13). Here, it will be observed, John dissociates himself, in a manner that can hardly be unintentional, from the Pauline conception of a death that atoned for sinners. Christ died for His friends,—to confirm them in the knowledge of His love and draw them yet closer to Him. Finally, as the death conditions the entrance of Jesus into His state of glory, so it is itself the

highest revelation of that glory which belonged to Him even on earth. Reference has been made already to the remarkable series of passages in which the true greatness of Jesus is set against the background of His seeming humiliation. His Cross was His "lifting up." In the hour of the scourging and mockery He came forth as the crowned King. The whole narrative of the Passion throbs with the conviction that His humbling Himself to the death of the Cross was also the Lord's exaltation. Such a conviction is altogether alien to strict Logos theory. Previous thinkers, working on the presuppositions of John's own theology, had been obliged to resolve the death of Christ into mere form and illusion. John himself is aware of the difficulty involved in it, and lays the chief stress on the "glory" to which the death was only a transition. None the less his religious instinct overmasters his theological consistency. The Lord who has compelled his reverence and brought God near to him is not the incarnate Logos, but Jesus Christ lifted up on His Cross.

CHAPTER VIII

LIFE

THE Fourth Gospel opens with the great thesis, "In Him was life." It closes with the emphatic statement of its main purpose, "that believing, ye may have life through His name." These two verses may be regarded as the poles between which the whole thought of the Gospel revolves. Jesus as the Son of God possessed in Himself a divine life; this life is communicated to those who believe on Him. The problem of Christianity, as it presents itself to the evangelist, is to account for the reappearance in the believer of the life that was manifested in Christ. But before discussing the solution we require to arrive at a fuller understanding of the problem. What is the nature of that life which was inherent in Christ, and is imparted by Him to His people?

In his doctrine of life, as in his theology generally, John stands at the confluence of two great streams of thought. Already in the Alexandrian philosophy an attempt had been made to reconcile the Hebrew and the Hellenic ideas of the supreme good. In Paulinism both ideas contribute, although in unequal measure, towards the formation

of a new and richer conception. John represents the stage of thought at which Greek and Jewish beliefs had finally run together. It only remained to combine the resultant doctrine with the historical data of Christianity and with the facts of religious experience.

Life in the Old Testament is primarily the physical, earthly life, the sum of energies which make up man's actual existence. The soul separated from the body does not cease to be, but it forfeits its portion in the true life. It either departs to the shadowy world of Sheôl, or, according to the more philosophical view of Ecclesiastes, is reabsorbed into the divine Being, "returns to God, who gave it." Thus the highest good is simply "length of days," the continuance of the bodily existence right on to its natural term. Two factors, however, were latent in the Old Testament conception from the beginning, and became more and more prominent in the course of the later development. In the first place, the radical element in life is activity. Mere physical existence is distinguished from that essential life which consists in the unrestricted play of all the energies, especially of the higher and more characteristic. In the loftier passages of the Psalms, more particularly, the idea of "life" has nearly always a pregnant sense. It is associated with joy, prosperity, peace, wisdom, righteousness; man "lives" according as he has free scope for the activities which are most distinctive of His spiritual nature. God Himself is emphatically the "living one." He is the creative, ever-active God,—

sufficient to Himself, the source of all reality and power. Life is His supreme attribute, distinguishing Him from men with their thousand weaknesses and limitations. The other factor in the Old Testament conception is even more important in its bearing on later thought. Since God alone possesses life in the highest sense, fellowship with Him is the one condition on which men can obtain it. "By every word of God doth man live" (Deut. viii. 3). "With Thee is the fountain of life" (Ps. xxxvi. 9). In the higher regions of Old Testament thought, life and communion with God are interchangeable ideas. The belief in immortality is never expressly stated, but, as Jesus Himself indicates, it was implicit in this knowledge of a God "who was not the God of the dead, but of the living."

So life in the Old Testament passes from a physical into a religious conception. It becomes equivalent to fellowship with God, through obedience to His will and possession of His Spirit. Life as thus conceived is indeed restricted to the brief space of earthly existence. "Death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down to the grave cannot hope for Thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day" (Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19). But this very restriction secured fulness and intensity to the essential idea of life. Future existence, when it came later within the purview of Jewish thought, was not emptied of all content in the interest of a one-sided idealism. It was life in as real and complete a sense as the present earthly life. All

the energies of man's being would find room in it, and would only be purified and heightened through a closer fellowship with God.

In the Synoptic teaching of Jesus the idea of life is substantially that of the Old Testament, unfolded in all its potential wealth of meaning. To Him also life is first of all the physical existence, and He advances on this conception along ethical and religious lines in the same manner as the psalmists and prophets. (1) He distinguishes between the essential "life" and the outward, subsidiary things with which it is so easily confused. "The life is more than meat" (Matt. vi. 25). "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke xii. 15). (2) Thus He arrives at the idea of something central and inalienable which constitutes the reality of life; and this He discovers in the moral activity. The body with its manifold faculties is only the organ by which man accomplishes his true task of obedience to God. Meat, raiment, and all the rest are necessary, but "seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." (3) In this manner He is led to the conception of a higher, spiritual life, gained through the sacrifice of the lower. "If a man hate not his own life, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke xiv. 26). "He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it" (Matt. x. 39).

Here, however, we become aware of the difficulty which meets us under different forms throughout our Lord's teaching. In His account of the supreme

blessing for which lower things must be sacrificed, He seems to pass abruptly from ethical to eschatological ideas. "Life" is a reward laid up for the righteous in the world to come. It is regarded sometimes as a new state of being (Matt. xxv. 46), sometimes as a sort of prize that can be bestowed in the same manner as houses and goods and lands (Mk. x. 30). The precise meaning to be attached to the "world to come" in which this "life" will be imparted, depends on our interpretation of the general conception of the kingdom of God. Our Lord would seem to waver between the idea of a world beyond death and that of a Messianic age apocalyptically revealed on earth. In either case, however, He thinks of life as of something still in the future, the peculiar blessing of the realised kingdom of God.

This future possession is defined more particularly in several passages as "eternal life," and the epithet might appear at first sight to imply a distinction. We find, however, on closer examination, that the term "life" itself usually involves the emphatic meaning. "This do and thou shalt live" is our Lord's reply to the inquiry concerning "eternal life." So when He says, "It is better to enter into life halt or maimed" (Matt. xviii. 8; Mk. ix. 43), or, "Narrow is the way that leadeth unto life (Matt. vii. 14), it is evidently the future blessing that is in His mind. Indeed, there is good ground for the conjecture that Jesus Himself never used the expression "eternal life."

Since the ethical and eschatological ideas are

denoted by the same word, we are justified in assuming that in the mind of Jesus they were bound up with each other. The "life" which is projected into the future, and described figuratively as a gift bestowed from without, is in the last resort the life of moral activity. This becomes apparent when we take account of certain further elements in our Lord's teaching.

(1) The condition on which the future reward is given, is faithful performance of the moral task in the present. Those shall "live" that keep the commandments. The narrow way that leads to life is the way of obedience and sacrifice. By voluntary loss of earthly things in the cause of Christ the disciples will gain "life." The Apocalyptic imagery does not conceal from us the essential thought of Jesus, that the promised "life" is nothing but the outcome and fulfilment of a moral obedience begun on earth.

(2) Life is not only a future fulfilment, but has a real beginning in the present. Thus in the saying "Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead" (Matt. viii. 22) Jesus implies that the disciples even now enter into possession of a new and higher life. They are the "living" as opposed to the children of this world, who are spiritually dead. The same thought appears in the parable of the Prodigal Son; "he was dead, and is alive again." Life in its full reality is the blessing of the world to come, but it will be different in degree, not in kind, from the present life of true discipleship.

(3) One element is common to the two types

of "life," and marks their ultimate identity. The future consummation, described by Jesus in vivid pictorial language, is in its substance a closer fellowship with God. In the kingdom which He anticipated, the pure in heart were to see God,—those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness were to be satisfied with God's presence. This perfect communion with God is the supreme reward laid up for the believer. It constitutes the inner meaning and content of the future life. In like manner the present life of moral obedience is in its essence a fellowship with God. The aim of Jesus is to bring His disciples even now into such a harmony with the divine will that they may be children of their Father who is in heaven, resembling Him and holding communion with Him. The eschatological idea of life thus resolves itself at its centre into the purely ethical and religious. The kingdom is already come when God's will is done on earth as it is done in heaven.

The transition from the teaching of Jesus to the Fourth Gospel is mediated by Paul. In the Pauline presentation, as in the Synoptic, "life" appears in the first instance as something that belongs to the future. The earthly existence, with its labour and struggle, is a condition of waiting, in the expectation of a life into which we shall hereafter enter. "Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. iii. 3, 4). Two influences, however, have com-

bined to modify the eschatological idea of Jesus before it meets us again in Paul.

(1) In the first place, the projection of life into the future is determined by a way of thinking which must, partly at least, be described as Hellenic. The fleshly nature is to Paul the stronghold of sin, the barrier between man's spirit and its higher destiny. Life cannot in any true sense begin until there is a deliverance from "this body of death." Paul is still, indeed, so deeply penetrated with Hebrew sentiment that he cannot conceive of a future life apart from a body, a "spiritual body," which will serve as its basis and organ. He is utterly removed from the Greek metaphysical doctrine which identifies life with the bare activity of the higher reason. None the less he has accepted, in its broad principle, the Greek opposition between the material and the spiritual. He regards the physical nature as actively hostile to the true life, which can only be realised in a world to come when the bondage of sense is finally broken.

(2) The belief in the Resurrection of Jesus has exercised a profound influence on Paul's whole thinking on the subject of life. What was formerly a vague idea, capable only of figurative expression, has now assumed a definite meaning. Life is that higher state of existence into which Jesus has actually entered. In the knowledge of the risen Saviour we have not only the assurance of the promised life, but a revelation of its nature. By thus connecting his thought of life with the fact of the Resurrection, Paul is enabled, on the one hand,

to keep clear of mere fruitless speculation. He does not start from abstract principles, but from the knowledge of a living Person, and answers the question, "What is life?" by simply pointing us to the risen Christ. And, on the other hand, he brings his conception into vital harmony with the Christian message. Even while he is influenced, more or less unconsciously, by the current philosophy, his interest is purely religious. Life has no meaning to him apart from the distinctive work of Christ.

Paul accepts, then, in its full extent, the view which regards life as a future possession; but he maintains at the same time that it can be in a manner anticipated. Christ has risen, and entered already on the fulness of the new life, and we can have fellowship with Him by faith. Through that fellowship we participate in life,—reaching forward to it through the hindrances of the flesh, though it cannot yet be fulfilled in us. "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal. ii. 20). The believer cannot yet say "I live," but he is conscious of an inward communion with the living Saviour, which is the earnest and security of his own life hereafter. In that sense life may be spoken of as an actual and present possession. Paul's thought of life is thus connected very closely with his doctrine of the Spirit, so much so that Spirit and Life are used almost as interchangeable terms. The Spirit is the divine power which became operative in the world through Christ, and which represents Him between His departure

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and His coming in glory. The true life is still future, but even now the believer may "live in the Spirit." He is endued already with a potential life, which will have its realisation in the world to come.

It is here that we discern the essential identity of Paul's doctrine with that presented to us in the Synoptic teaching of Jesus. The work of the Spirit, according to Paul, is chiefly a work of moral regeneration. Life in the Spirit is the life of meekness, temperance, holiness, love, faith. These things, in other words, constitute the substance of that higher life, which here asserts itself fitfully, under the manifold restraints and weaknesses of the flesh, and will hereafter be perfected.

It is now necessary to take some account of that other influence which is already discernible in Paul, and which becomes all-important in the subsequent development of his thought by the Fourth Evangelist. We have seen that the Hebrew mind, averse to metaphysical speculation, accepted the idea of life as ultimate. The complex of energies —physical, rational, moral—which constitutes man's life must be taken together, and did not admit of any further analysis. God in like manner was the living God. All His attributes working in harmony made up the life through which He revealed Himself in the creation and government of the world. The Old Testament knows nothing of abstruse questions regarding the nature of God. It assumes from the beginning that He is a living Person, possessed in an infinitely higher degree of

all the manifold powers that cooperate in the life of man. Greek thought, on the other hand, was unable to find rest in a composite idea like that of life. It distinguished in man between the lower material nature and the higher activity of reason. It separated the reason which is concerned with sensible, phenomenal things from that which takes cognisance of ideal truth. These several activities in man's being were not only distinct, but at warfare with each other. The higher reason in which the Self consisted was something apart from the life as a whole, and its supreme task was to escape into freedom. "If pure intelligence, as compared with human nature, is divine, so too will the life in accordance with it be divine compared with man's ordinary life. Wherefore, so far as we can we must live the immortal life, looking to the highest principle in us" (Arist. *Nic. Eth.* x. 6). The Hebrew conception of the living God is likewise alien to Greek philosophical thought. The whole activity by which God appears to manifest Himself, is subjected to a sharp analysis with a view to determining His essential nature. He must be self-caused, self-sufficient. He cannot participate in change or movement or outward form. Nothing that belongs to human passion can be attributed to him. He is wholly and eternally what man is in part, a pure intelligence, having Himself as the sole object of His thought, since He alone is ideally true and perfect. To quote Aristotle again: "Life resides in God, for the energy of thought is life; and this energy as it exists absolutely in God is the best and

eternal life. We assert, then, that God is living, eternal, best, so that life and continuous eternal existence must be ascribed to Him" (*Metaph.* xi. 6).

It is apparent, therefore, that the idea of life, so far as it has a place at all in Greek philosophy, has little in common with the corresponding idea in the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, we meet with it very rarely, even in the highly abstract sense which it bears in the passage just quoted. The fundamental category with the Greek thinkers is that of being. God Himself is simply the absolute, self-existent Being over against the unreal phenomenal world. As such He is identified with the pure activity of thought, since thought is the ultimate reality. Life, as Aristotle says, can be ascribed to Him, but only when life has been depleted of everything that gave it meaning to the prophets and psalmists. "God is living, inasmuch as the energy of thought is life." He is pure Intelligence, abstracted from every form of real activity and sensible manifestation, and communing for ever with itself.

In the system of Philo, the Hebrew and Greek conceptions are in some measure drawn together. On the one hand, Philo even goes beyond his master Plato in emphasising the opposition of material and spiritual. The body, he is never tired of insisting, is a prison-house in which the soul is beset with a thousand hindrances and confusions. In proportion as a man rises above this bondage of sense and identifies himself with the principle of thought within him, does he attain to the true life.

To Philo, as to the Greek thinkers, God is the eternal Reason, and in the exercise of the higher reasoning activity we enter into communion with Him. On the other hand, Philo is powerfully influenced, and that in two directions, by the Old Testament teaching. He realises, first, that life involves an ethical as well as an intellectual element. The release from the bodily affections is desirable not only because they cloud the higher intelligence, but because they interfere with the right practice of virtue, which is regarded as an end in itself. By his recognition of this ethical moment in the conception of life Philo breaks away, more or less consciously, from the one-sided intellectualism of his Greek masters. He falls back on the Old Testament idea, that life is the whole energy of the personal being, and is not coincident with any one of the activities in which it manifests itself. Again, to Philo, with his Jewish instincts and education, God was something more than the absolute Being of the Greek philosophy. It is evident that, while he uses the Platonic language, and sedulously explains away the anthropomorphism of the Old Testament, he is still mastered by the belief in a living and personal God. The contemplation of God, in which life attains to its fulfilment, involves a real fellowship as of one person with another. There could be no question with Philo of a mere reabsorption of the finite reason into the infinite, for the persistence of the individual being is assumed as the necessary condition of communion with God. Thus in the Alexandrian system we have an irrup-

tion of Hebrew ideas into a conception of life which in its main character is borrowed from Greek philosophy. It is maintained, in genuine Platonic fashion, that the true life is inherent in the reasoning soul, and is repressed and hampered by union with the material body. At the same time, the results to which Hebrew thought attained along the lines of a physical conception are tacitly assumed. Life does not consist in thought only, but in the whole energy of man's nature. It finds its highest realisation in communion with God, who is regarded ethically and personally.

Turning now to the Fourth Gospel, we may best take our departure from the point in which the Johannine doctrine differs most obviously from the Synoptic and Pauline. Paul, in accordance with the primitive Christian view, thought of life as the supreme blessing of the future. We have the sure promise of it, and can in some measure anticipate it by living even now "in the Spirit;" but the actual possession is laid up for us in the world to come. John maintains that life in its full reality is communicated here and now. He speaks in several instances of "eternal life," but the epithet does not suggest that the life is still future. It only denotes the quality of the new life as having its origin in the higher, eternal world. Indeed, the primary aim of the evangelist is to affirm the claim of the believer in Christ to an actual and present possession of that life which had hitherto been associated with another state of existence. Christ had made Himself flesh

in order that in this world of time, amidst the limitations of the earthly conditions, we might become partakers of the eternal life.

It follows that death, in the Fourth Gospel, no longer possesses the significance which was ascribed to it by Paul. The Old Testament idea of death as the chief evil, imposed on man as a penalty for sin, reappears in the Pauline theology, and determines in some important respects its whole character. To John, death is nothing but the natural close of the bodily existence. It marks the moment when the true life is finally set free, but does not alter in any way the essential nature of that life. The real change takes place in the act of the new birth, when the transition is effected, under the agency of the Spirit, from the lower to the higher world. From that time onward, through all the accidents of time, including death itself, the believer is in possession of eternal life. It is true that the antithesis of "life" and "death" is continually present in the Gospel, as it is in Paul, but it needs to be taken in a special, theological sense. As "life" is something different from the physical life, so death has nothing to do with the mere dissolution of the body. It denotes not so much a single event as the whole condition of exclusion from the higher life. The natural man, who has not participated in the change effected by the new birth, is in a state of "death." "He that believeth on Me is passed" (already in that very act) "from death unto life" (v. 24).

At this point, however, we are met by one of

those apparent contradictions which from time to time obscure the characteristic teaching of the Gospel. There are passages in which John might appear to depart deliberately from his view of life as present, and to fall back on a primitive eschatological view. "The hour is coming, when all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of condemnation" (v. 28). "This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (vi. 40; cf. 39, 44, 54). These passages are doubtless to be explained, like others that have already been noted, as reflecting a popular Christian dogma which was not wholly consonant with the writer's own thought, although he desired to allow due place to it. It has to be remarked that in all the passages the allusion to futurity is conjoined with emphatic reference to the present communication of the life. "The hour is coming, and now is." "That every one who believeth may [at this moment] have everlasting life." "Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood *hath* eternal life: and I will raise him up at the last day." The future resurrection is admitted; John is at one with popular Christianity in anticipating some fuller realisation of life in the world to come. But he regards the "rising at the last day" as only the fulfilment and confirmation of something already effected, not as the real beginning of a new state of being.

This line of thought is developed most fully in the story of the raising of Lazarus, the culminating instance of Christ's work as Life-giver. The underlying idea of the whole narrative is contained in the great saying of Jesus, "I am the Resurrection, and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die" (xi. 25, 26). Martha has declared her faith — the traditional faith of the Church—that her brother "will rise in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus answers that the life imparted by Him is independent of physical life and death. Those who believe in Him have risen already; their death is only in seeming, and they carry with them, into the world beyond, the same life on which they entered here. Lazarus therefore had never died. Through faith in Christ he had possessed himself of the true life, and still continued in it, in spite of his apparent death. But this fact of his continuance in life is made manifest by his return at the call of Jesus to a bodily existence. The real miracle had been effected in him during his lifetime, in the act of his believing in Jesus; but his resurrection in the flesh gives a visible evidence and confirmation to the miracle.

Thus the effort of John, everywhere in the Gospel, is to apprehend the eternal life as something actual and present. He accepts the popular belief in a resurrection at the last day, but he empties it of the significance which had attached to it in earlier Christian thought. It is not the commencement, but simply the manifestation, of the new life. The

true resurrection takes place in this present world, when a man believes in Christ and makes the great transition "from death unto life." The change is an inward, invisible one, but is none the less real and vital. All men could discern the wonder of Lazarus rising in his grave-clothes, and leaving the tomb where he had lain four days. But this was only the reflection in forms of sense of the real miracle which had come to pass in Lazarus, and which is ever repeated in Christian experience. "He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

We have now to consider the nature of this eternal life, which is no mere future possession, but is communicated here in the present to those who believe in Christ. It is evident to every reader of the Gospel that John has a conception of life widely different from that of Jesus in His Synoptic teaching, and even from that of Paul. Those earlier conceptions have indeed left their impression more deeply than at first sight appears, but there are elements in the Johannine doctrine which profoundly modify its character. In order to explain them we have to take account of the Greek philosophical as well as of the Jewish and Christian influences.

The evangelist nowhere attempts to define in so many words what he means by "life." It might indeed appear as if such a definition were offered in the great saying (xvii. 3), "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." This verse,

however, important as it is for the understanding of John's doctrine, cannot be construed as a definition. It only declares that the knowledge of God through Christ carries with it the assurance of life. The attainment of this knowledge is the chief end of all Christian activity, for those who know God inherit the life that proceeds from Him. The life, nevertheless, is more than the knowledge by which it is conditioned and mediated. But while little is said by way of express definition, the general import of the Johannine conception is sufficiently clear. The life which Christ communicates is the absolute, divine life. It is assumed that in God, and in the Logos who is one with Him, a life resides which is different in kind from that of men, and is the real, the "eternal" life (v. 26; cf. i. 4).

We have seen that in the Old Testament teaching, life is identified in the last resort with the life of God. He, as the ever-working and altogether just and holy One, is the living God, and men are possessed of life according as they hold fellowship with Him. But the difference between the human and the divine life is conceived under moral categories. God is other than man, inasmuch as all the human attributes are infinitely heightened in Him, and cooperate in the service of an absolutely holy will. He is higher than men, "as the heaven is high above the earth," but there is no suggestion of a radical difference in nature between His life and ours. On the contrary, the fellowship into which He calls His people presupposes a likeness—an ultimate identity. The Johannine conception of

life as the life of God has nothing in common with this Old Testament doctrine. It rests on the assumption of Greek philosophy, that the world of true being is wholly disparate from the lower phenomenal world. "God is Spirit," and the life which resides in Him must be different in kind from that which manifests itself in man's fleshly nature. It cannot be imparted by any ethical process of obedience and fellowship, for it implies another sort of being in which man, by the conditions of his nature, does not participate.

The idea of life is closely related by our evangelist to the ideas of Truth and Light, and in this connection we can most clearly discern its affinities with Greek speculation. "Truth" is one of the characteristic words of the Fourth Gospel, and is used invariably in a well-defined and peculiar meaning. The "truth" of anything is the spiritual reality of which it is the symbol (cf. the "true vine," "true bread," "true light," etc.). It is assumed that over against the world of visible things there is a world of supersensible realities, which has now for the first time been revealed through Christ. The conception obviously runs back to the Platonic doctrine of the "ideas,"—the fixed everlasting forms, which are perceived by the pure intelligence as they impress themselves on material things. In Alexandrian philosophy the Platonic theory was brought into relation with Jewish thought, and from Philo it is taken over, in a modified sense, by the Fourth Evangelist. He interprets theologically the idea which had arisen, in the first instance, out of a

philosophical necessity. "Truth" becomes another name for the divine nature, which alone has ultimate reality. God is "the only true" (xvii. 3), and all other things have "truth" in them according as they reflect His thought and purpose. The mission of Christ who has come forth from God is to declare "the truth," and as one with God He is Himself "the Truth" in His own Person. Through Him it becomes possible for men, in the midst of earthly change and illusion, to lay hold on the eternal reality.

The other term "Light," which is constantly recurring in the Gospel, may be taken as, broadly speaking, identical with "truth." It is, indeed, impossible to sum up the whole content of the Johannine idea of light in one exact definition. The term is chosen because of its very largeness and vagueness. Light is the immemorial symbol of all that is divine and holy; it suggests gladness, security, quickening, illumination. These meanings are all present in the word as used by John, and we have to determine in each individual passage which of them is for the moment predominant. Taken generally, however, light is the equivalent, in the language of the imagination, of what is abstractly called "the truth." Over against the world of "darkness" there is the upper world of "light," of reality and perfection; and as Christ describes Himself as the "Truth," He claims elsewhere to be the "Light." Men have life through Him because He brings them out into the "Light," makes them partakers of the divine reality from

which they have hitherto been debarred by the conditions of their earthly nature.

The substitution of "light" for "truth" (so far as it marks a real enrichment of the idea) implies that the higher reality is ever seeking to reveal itself. From the beginning it has been shining in the "darkness," although the darkness comprehended it not. We can here trace a suggestion, which is not, however, elaborated further, of the ultimate cause and motive of God's revelation of Himself in the Word made flesh. God was the eternal reality, the "truth" which the minds of men had ever been seeking after; but the truth in Him was also Light. Involved in His inmost nature there was the will to shine forth and communicate Himself to His creatures. "Light," as thus considered, forms a kind of middle term between the two views of the Christian revelation which are set before us in the Gospel. It connects itself, on the one hand, with the metaphysical conception of the Logos, who was with God from all eternity as the agent of His self-revelation. On the other hand, it implies an ethical motive in God's manifestation of Himself in Christ. His nature was one of Light, of infinite Love. He so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.

Truth and Light are not simply identified with the divine Life. On the contrary, it is clearly indicated that life is something larger and deeper, into which they enter as constituent elements. "The Way, the Truth, the Life" form an ascending series; Christ is the Way that leads to

knowledge of the Truth, and therefore to Life. "The Life is the Light of men,"—that is, the life carries with it, as one of its consequences, participation in the light. Nevertheless the idea is everywhere present that life belongs to God, inasmuch as He is the ultimate reality. In other words, John has taken over the Greek conception of God as absolute Being, and associates His divine life with His elevation above the earthly and phenomenal. Metaphysical categories have assumed the place of the moral and religious categories of primitive Christianity.

The affinity with Greek thinking is further indicated by the connection of life with knowledge, which will engage our attention in a later chapter. The saying, "This is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God," cannot be regarded as a definition, but at all events it lays stress on knowledge as the chief factor in the attainment of life. Making all allowance for the larger meaning which enters into the Johannine "knowledge," and which renders it equivalent in some measure to "faith," we have to recognise that the intellectual moment lies at the centre. Since he construes the "truth" in a Greek-philosophical sense, John is compelled to advance the further step, and attach a paramount value to the act of "knowing." He, indeed, perceives the danger of a one-sided emphasis on knowledge, and protests, more or less explicitly, against a purely intellectual view of Christianity, such as prevailed among the heretical sects. None the less he derived like them from the current

philosophy, which conceived of God as absolute Being. Communion with God, participation in His divine life, was therefore conditioned by knowledge, and the knowledge was itself a chief element in the life. In this aspect of John's teaching we discover a genuine trace of the fundamental Greek conception.

At this point, however, the native Hebrew strain in John's thinking blends itself with the Greek, and essentially modifies it. We have seen that in Greek philosophy the category of life had only a formal and subordinate value. God was living in so far as the "energy of thought" was life, but it was impossible to ascribe a life to Him analogous to that which subsists in man. As pure Being He could have no part in change or passion; the complex of energies which constitute life in man could not be predicated of the absolutely simple divine nature. John, however, as a Jewish thinker, cannot escape from the idea of God as the living God. He assumes that in Him, as in man, there is an animating principle which forms the ground of His manifold activities, and is the ultimate and eternal life. Only this life of God, corresponding with that of man, must be altogether different in kind. God as the absolute Being has nothing in common with the earthly nature, and His life compared to ours is what the "truth" is to phenomenal things. Is it possible for man, who is "born of flesh," the creature of the lower world, to become partaker of the higher spiritual life?

Thus it follows, from the combination of the Hebrew and Greek ideas, that John involves himself in a view which may fairly be described as semi-physical. The true life is regarded as a kind of higher essence inherent in the divine nature, analogous to the life-principle in man, but different in quality,—spiritual instead of earthly. Ethical conceptions fall into a secondary place. Man requires to undergo a radical change not in heart merely, but in the very constitution of his nature. Until he possesses himself of the higher, diviner essence there can be no thought of his participating in the life of God.

It is here that we come to understand the significance attached by John to his doctrine of the Word made flesh. Since the divine life is something different in kind from the natural earthly life, no effort on man's part, nothing but the infusion into his nature of the higher essence, can make him a child of God. The miracle first became possible through the Incarnation in Jesus. He as the Logos partook of the divine nature. "In Him was life." "As the Father hath life in Himself, so He hath given to the Son to have life in Himself." And He, who thus shared from all eternity in the absolute, self-existent life of God, came down into this lower world and identified Himself with our race. The gift that seemed to be for ever beyond man's reach was now directly accessible to him. Through Christ he entered into fellowship with God, and received into himself the divine life.

This general conception of the work of Christ as Life-giver may be illustrated from three passages, in all of which the semi-physical character of John's doctrine is clearly discernible. First, we have the miracle at Cana, "the manifestation of Christ's glory," which was typical of all the work that followed. By the change of water into wine He expressed symbolically the ultimate purpose of His coming,—to transmute man's nature into something richer and higher. It has often been remarked that in this miracle there is no hint of any ethical meaning; the whole stress is laid on the magical power which could change one substance into another. And the symbol in this respect is true to the spiritual fact, as John conceives it. The difference between the earthly and the divine life is an essential one, like that between water and wine, and can only be overcome by an act of sheer miraculous power on the part of God.

Another passage, likewise allegorical, expresses the same idea, and brings it at the same time into closer relation to the Johannine doctrine as a whole. Jesus compares Himself to the vine from which the branches derive their nourishment. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no more can ye except ye abide in Me" (xv. 4). The passage will fall to be considered later in its bearings on the ultimate teaching of the Gospel, but at present it is only necessary to mark the general assumption that underlies it. Christ, like the stem of the vine, possesses life in Himself, and imparts it to those who "abide in Him." The life

is conceived after the manner of a physical energy which must be transmitted directly from its main source. It is a higher essence inhering in the Person of Christ, and passes into the believer when he is united to Christ in a relation of mystical fellowship.

The idea comes out still more fully and unmistakably in our third passage,—the exposition of the meaning of the Eucharist in the sixth chapter (vi. 51–59). Jesus here declares that, "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have not life in yourselves." It is implied that the principle of life in Christ was something wholly different from that in men. In order to possess themselves of that truer life they must become incorporate with Christ, and so absorb His divine nature into their own. We have seen already that, while aiming at a more spiritual interpretation of the Supper, John claims for it a real value and efficacy. It is the mystery in which Christ dispenses life to those who believe on Him. The life was present in Him as an ethereal essence, and is transmitted through the elements of the Eucharist, which represent His flesh and blood.

Starting, then, from the assumption that Jesus was the Logos, one in nature with God, and combining Greek-philosophical with primitive Hebrew ideas, John arrives at the conception of life as a higher energy, analogous to the physical life-principle in man. This conception, however, is interwoven with another, which is radically distinct

from it. John the metaphysician is also John the Christian disciple, whose faith is grounded, ultimately, in an inward religious experience. He seeks to embody the truths of Christianity in forms borrowed from an alien speculation, but it is still possible to trace out the real undercurrent of his thought.

Jesus had, indeed, been the Life-giver, in a sense wholly different from that which John assumes in his philosophical construction. By the might of His faith and love, by the revelation of God imparted through their knowledge of Himself, He had lifted His disciples into a new life. But the change which He had effected in them was a moral change. His nature had transmitted itself to them as a spirit of goodness, holiness, patience, self-forgetfulness. These moral attributes, according to the teaching and example of Jesus, were the true attributes of God, and He enabled His people to attain to them, and thus to participate in the divine life. "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you,—that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. v. 44). There was no question of a magical transmutation of human nature into some kind of higher substance. The life of God was to be realised through obedience to the will of God.

The evangelist, therefore, is seeking to explain a fact of Christian experience. Jesus Christ had made possible to men a new life. Through faith in Him thousands had undergone what was nothing less than a second birth, and John himself had known in his own soul this transforming, regenerat-

ing power of Christ. He attempts a metaphysical analysis of the life, on the lines of his Logos hypothesis; but all the time he conceives of it religiously, and in so doing takes up the ideas of primitive Christianity, and works them out to clearer and profounder issues. It is here that we discover the characteristic and permanent contribution of the Fourth Gospel to Christian thought.

In the first place, John has realised more fully than any of his predecessors that Christianity is a new life, that it implies a complete inward change, a regeneration of the whole nature. The truth is insisted on by Jesus Himself in familiar Synoptic utterances. "Either make the tree good and its fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt." "Except ye be converted, and become as little children." "Not that which goeth in, but that which cometh out defileth a man." But it was reserved for John to perceive in its full extent the deep-reaching import of these and kindred sayings. The believer in Christ is essentially a new man, governed by motives and instincts that had no place in his old nature. He has come out of the false existence, and lives henceforth in the true world of God.

Again, the evangelist perceived, as not even Paul had done before him, that life can only be imparted by a living Person. His work took the form not of an exposition of the doctrine or the moral law of Christianity, but of a history of Jesus Christ as He sojourned among men. His immediate personal influence, acting on them continually, was

the real quickening power by which His disciples were transformed into newness of life. And in every age of His Church, as in the first days, Jesus must Himself be the Life-giver. His people must enter into direct fellowship with Him, who is still present to every believing heart, that abiding in Him they may have life.

Once more—and here we touch the central thought in John's teaching—he identifies the new life in the believer with the life of Christ Himself. What Jesus imparts is His own "flesh and blood," the very spirit by which He Himself lived. From age to age this life of His is reproduced in His followers, giving them power to become the sons of God. It will be necessary in a later chapter to dwell more fully on this great thought of the Gospel, and here we need only indicate it as the underlying motive in John's doctrine of life. Christ, to our evangelist, is not only the Life-giver, but Himself the Life. The end of Christian discipleship is to receive Christ into the heart, to unite ourselves with Him in a relation so deep and personal that He lives again in us.

There are therefore two conceptions of life, wholly different from each other, which are both present in the mind of John and are fused into apparent harmony. On the one hand, in accordance with the Logos hypothesis, the true life is conceived as a higher kind of Being. It is the energy of the divine nature, self-existent, indestructible, purer in quality than the life which resides in man. It was present in Christ as the Son of God, and is communicated to those who have entered into the

mystical relation of union with Him. He assimilates our grosser nature to His, so that it undergoes a transmutation and becomes heavenly instead of earthly. On the other hand, John sets out from the impression created on him by the historical Jesus. The life of Jesus was the divine life; and what He sought to communicate to men was the secret of His own moral personality. To have the same will as He had, the same spirit of love and goodness and holiness, was to participate in the true life of God. Between this ethical conception and the metaphysical one which runs parallel to it, there is no real identity. The one belongs to the world of religious experience, the other to a world of speculative theory.

We cannot but recognise that John transfers to his philosophical conception a meaning which belongs properly to the religious idea of life. The new moral energy imparted by Christ is explained as a vital essence, analogous to that which informs the body, but higher in kind,—spiritual life as opposed to earthly. This attempt to reconcile two ideas which are in their nature disparate, serves in great measure to obscure and confuse the message of the Gospel. But in spite of much that is difficult and even contradictory in the evangelist's thought, we can discern the central truth,—the simplest yet the deepest in Christianity,—which he had realised in his own experience and sought to convey to others. To know Christ and hold fellowship with Him is eternal life. In Him was life, and we also have life through His name.

CHAPTER IX

THE COMMUNICATION OF LIFE

THE gift of Christ is summed up by the Fourth Evangelist in the one word "Life." We have sought to determine what meaning he attaches to this word, and it now remains to consider his solution of the problem in view of which the whole Gospel is written. How is the life that was in Christ communicated by Him to His followers? How is it possible for those who have never seen Him to enter into a personal relation with the Life-giver, and receive His gift? We are concerned, in the first place, with the more general of these two questions, which are both involved in the problem as it presents itself to John.

Jesus in His Synoptic teaching had already declared the one condition on which His power could become operative in the lives of men. "Thy faith hath saved thee." "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." The essence of this "belief" was the recognition of a divine might and goodness, manifesting itself in Him. He Himself, in His absolute certainty of the redeeming love of God, was the guarantee of that love to

others, and by their trust in Him they yielded themselves up to it and allowed it to effect its purpose. The same thought is expressed in our Lord's favourite image of the child-like heart. The faith that saved was present in a man when he could lay aside all pride and vain striving of his own, and submit himself wholly to the divine influence. Jesus in His own person was the supreme example of this attitude of simple trust, and He sought to communicate His own spirit to His disciples. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Through all His teaching the emphasis is laid on faith, understood in this its deepest sense of trust in God and inward surrender to Him. In answer to such trust in Him, God bestows healing and forgiveness and the power of a new life.

Paul describes the appropriation of the gift of Christ in terms of an elaborate theology. Here also the essential thing is faith, but faith is invested with a definite and peculiar meaning. For Paul, the cardinal fact of the revelation in Christ was the atoning death, and the one object of faith was the Cross, whereby God accomplished His redeeming purpose through His Son. Various elements are included in the Pauline "faith" which have little to do with the original teaching of Jesus. It presupposes a given estimate of the Jewish law, a unique personal experience, a background of ideas derived from Pharisaic and rabbinical theory. But intrinsically the thought of Paul is similar to that

which finds its simpler expression in the Synoptic Gospels. His faith, in its essence, was the yielding of himself to the love of God revealed in Christ,—revealed once for all in the grand act of sacrifice by which the Saviour's life was consummated. God offered Himself to men through Christ, and faith is the recognition of God, the opening of the heart to receive Him. To Paul, therefore, as to the first disciples, the condition on which the new life is imparted is a simple religious one,—trust in God, elicited by His revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ.

In the Fourth Gospel, as in the Synoptic and the Pauline teaching, the chief emphasis is laid, or appears to be laid, on faith. The word πίστις in its substantive form is never used, but the equivalent verb is present under almost all its possible variations, and dominates every chapter of the Gospel. It is evident, however, even to a superficial reader, that the "believing" so constantly insisted on by John is something much narrower and poorer than the Pauline "faith." It implies not so much an inward disposition of trust and obedience, as the acceptance of a given dogma. To "believe" is to grant the hypothesis that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Son of God. The evangelist devotes his whole endeavour to presenting this belief in such a manner that it may impress conviction. He sets forth in all its aspects the "witness" that was afforded to the claim of Jesus, by His words, His miracles, the wonder of His personality, the divine sanctions which accompanied His work. It is assumed that the very purpose of a Christian Gospel must be to vindicate a certain view of Christ's

Person, in order that men may "believe" and so obtain the gift of life.

Nevertheless, there are elements in John's conception of faith which differentiate it from the mere intellectual assent demanded in the later orthodoxy. In the first place, the act of belief, though placed apparently at the beginning, comes in reality at the end, of a religious experience. John himself appears to set out with the thesis that Jesus was the incarnate Logos, and to deduce from this assumption the whole story of His life and work. But the speculative idea, as we have tried to demonstrate, was an after-thought. It gave expression, under the forms of the current philosophy, to an estimate of the Saviour's Person which in substance and origin was purely religious. In like manner, the act of belief to which the evangelist attaches a paramount value is the summing up in an intellectual judgment of a previous religious experience. The confession that Jesus is the Son of God implies that you have been drawn to Jesus, and have recognised His saving power and the divine character of His life. The "belief" is no mere formal act, but the outcome of a deep inward conviction, and only as such does it have validity and meaning.

In this sense we can best explain a marked peculiarity in the Johannine conception of faith as compared with that of the earlier Gospels. The Synoptic writers, in recording the miracles of Jesus, almost always represent them as preceded and conditioned by an act of faith. Jesus could do no mighty works unless men first believed—waited on

Him in an attitude of trustful receptivity. In the Fourth Gospel, on the other hand, belief is the consequence, not the indispensable condition, of the miracles. "He manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him"(ii. 11). "Himself believed, and his whole house" (spoken of the nobleman after the healing of his son [iv. 53]). "Believe me for the very works' sake" (xiv. 11). This view of faith as a result of the miracles is no doubt connected with the impoverishment of the main conception; the later evangelist is concerned with belief as a definite act of intellectual assent, rather than with the inward disposition which is faith in the true and deeper sense. But at the same time it serves to indicate that belief to his mind was only the final moment in a much larger process. Jesus does not demand the acknowledgment of His divine claim till He has revealed Himself to men and won them to a heart-felt conviction. The miracles by which He induced belief during His earthly sojourn foreshadowed the greater works which He would accomplish afterwards in His invisible fellowship with His people. These bear continual witness to Him, so that the confession of His Sonship is much more than the acceptance of a given dogma handed down by tradition. It is bound up with a living experience, of which it is the outward symbol and seal.

In yet another way the Johannine conception of belief involves the presence of a deeper element. Assent is demanded not merely to a bare fact, but to the claim of a person, and it therefore partakes in some measure of the character of trust. The

judgment, "Jesus is the Son of God," is different in kind from such a judgment as "the world was made in six days." To make an affirmation concerning Christ implies the vision in your mind of the living Person, who commands your reverence and obedience. The intellectual act of assent to His claim is combined, it may be unconsciously, with a moral judgment, and is ultimately grounded in it. There are passages of the Gospel in which the belief in Christ becomes indistinguishable from the trust He awakens in those who have known His fellowship. "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me" (xiv. 1). "He that believeth on Me believeth on Him that sent Me" (xii. 44). Even where belief retains its normal sense of acquiescence in the claim advanced by Jesus, a suggestion of the deeper meaning is present in it. "While ye have the light believe in the light, that ye may become sons of light" (xii. 36). "He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also" (xiv. 12). "He that seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, hath life" (vi. 40). In such verses the idea of belief on Christ merges insensibly in the further idea of a real apprehension of Him, of such a nature that His power imparts itself to the believer. Since a living Person is the object of the act of belief, that act, in itself a mere intellectual one, becomes involved with moral elements. "Believing" includes something of the larger character of faith.

It is necessary, therefore, to go behind the conception of belief in order to understand the Johannine doctrine of the appropriation of life. The

act of belief is the outcome of an antecedent process, which is capable of analysis into several distinct stages.

(1) The immediate condition of belief is "knowledge." These two ideas, "believing" and "knowing," are several times conjoined in such a way that they might seem to be practically identical. "They have known surely that I came out from Thee, and have believed that Thou didst send Me" (xvii. 8). "That ye may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him" (x. 38). In such sayings, however, two different acts are spoken of, one of which is regarded as consequent on the other. The "knowledge" completes itself, and becomes effectual in the definite "belief." This is apparent, not only from a closer consideration of the relevant passages, but from a larger survey of the doctrine of knowledge, which holds an important place in the Gospel.

Nowhere is John's affinity to the Greek thinkers more unmistakable than in the value he assigns to knowledge; yet here again we must make allowance for the double genesis of his conception. "Knowing," in the Hebrew use of the term, is more than an intellectual activity. It contains elements of a moral and religious nature, and when God Himself is the object of the knowledge, these become predominant. To "know the Lord," in the language of the psalmists and prophets, is to trust in God, to serve Him, to enter into harmony with His eternal will and purpose. The Johannine idea of knowledge is tinged throughout with a reflection of this Old Testament meaning. Jesus can say in bitter re-

proach to the unbelieving Jews, "Ye neither know Me, nor my Father: if ye had known Me, ye should have known my Father also" (viii. 19). He declares in the close of the intercessory prayer, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee" (xvii. 25). In such utterances it is impossible to limit the reference to a bare theoretical knowledge. This, indeed, is implicitly contrasted with the deeper sympathy and apprehension in which the real knowledge of God consists. The great verse, "this is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent," must likewise be explained in the light of this wider conception of knowledge. Take it as we will, the verse is strongly marked with the Greek-philosophical influence, but this influence has been at least modified by the fusion of the Greek idea with another and larger one derived from the Old Testament.

When all allowance is made, however, for the ethical and religious value attached to knowledge, we have to recognise that the evangelist is working with essentially the same idea as the Greek thinkers. Life, in the Platonic theory, is perfectly realised when the soul escapes from the bondage of sense to the untroubled contemplation of ideal truth. The ascent to life is therefore conditioned by knowledge, which is nothing else than the endeavour of man to set himself free and exercise the true activity of his nature. Virtue itself is only an application or a particular form of right knowledge. In Philo this mode of thinking is brought into intimate connection with the pervading doctrine of the Logos. Accord-

ing as a man advances in true knowledge, he realises more and more fully the Logos principle inherent in his nature, and thus enters into communion with the divine life. Philo, as we have seen, stops short of the Greek identification of life with the pure activity of thought; but on knowledge as the means of deliverance, the direct path to the higher life, he lays the same emphasis as his Greek masters.

There can be little doubt that in the meaning and the function which he assigns to knowledge, John is far more closely dependent on Plato and Philo than on the Old Testament. Writing as he did for Greek readers from the point of view of Greek philosophical theory, he cannot have meant to ignore the fixed Hellenic conception of "knowing" as primarily an act of the logical reason. When he insists on the importance of true "knowledge," he is speaking presumably in the language of his own time and culture, even although a reminiscence of Hebrew usage still lingers about the term. An examination of far the greater number of the passages in which the idea of knowledge is prominent, confirms us in this assumption, that the intellectual moment is the chief one in his mind. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if you do them" (xiii. 17). "Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee" (xvii. 7). "We know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" (xiv. 5). "Ye worship ye know not what: we worship that which we know" (iv. 22). A special significance attaches in this connection to the saying (viii. 32),

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,"—where the idea of knowledge is related to that of "truth" and to that of deliverance, in a manner which at once suggests the scheme of Philo. In the light of such passages it may be affirmed that even where knowing seems to bear the wider connotation, the element of intellectual apprehension enters into it, and indeed determines its whole character. True to his Greek prepossessions, John regarded the activity of the reason as a chief factor in the attainment of the higher life. The original demand for a simple, child-like faith was no longer sufficient in a theology which had allied Christianity with a metaphysical doctrine. There was need for "knowledge" in the strict sense, intellectual insight into those deep doctrines which were henceforth to rank as the supreme verities. The evangelist guards himself, it is true, from the one-sided Gnostic estimate of the importance of knowledge; and his intellectualism is more than corrected by the profound religious spirit in which he contemplates the Person and work of Christ. None the less he must be held in great measure responsible for the eventual hardening of Christianity into a dogmatic system. One side of his thinking was followed out to its legitimate consequence when religion was construed as a higher knowledge, to which none but the wise and prudent posesssed the key.

How, then, is knowledge related to belief? The two ideas may be said to coincide when they are both taken in the wider sense of which they are

capable. The "belief" which connotes the religious experience that has led up to it is hardly distinguishable from the larger "knowledge." But knowledge in its stricter acceptation is one of the factors which precede and create belief. "They have known surely that I came forth from Thee, and have believed." Before the belief in Christ is possible, there must be a recognition on the part of the intellect of His divine origin and dignity. By reflection on His words and works and the manifold witness that attested Him,—by discipline in the apprehension of the "truth," men are wrought into deeper sympathy with Him. They are persuaded at last to the confession that He was no other than the Son of God. Faith as described in the Synoptic teaching is simply the opening of the heart to God, and the humble and child-like are the most capable of it. The Johannine "belief" is the result of "knowledge." It presupposes a mind fully enlightened, and equal to high speculations on the Person and nature of Christ.

(2) Knowledge, however, though in itself an intellectual activity, is only possible on certain ethical conditions. This is expressed most clearly in the great saying (vii. 17), "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself." The mind is enlightened to discern the true nature of the revelation in Christ by a habit of moral obedience. It is recognised, in like manner, that the chief hindrance which prevented the Jews from respond-

ing to the message of Jesus was an ethical one. "How can ye believe, who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from the only God?" (v. 44). "Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye cannot hear My word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (viii. 43, 44) The same hindrance is operative in every case where men prove insensible to the appeal addressed to them by Christ. "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God" (iii. 20 21). By this strong ethical interest underlying his theory of knowledge John separates himself, perhaps intentionally, from the Gnostic tendency which had infected the religious thinking of his time. While admitting the importance of right knowledge as the necessary condition to a saving belief, he is still conscious that knowledge must run back to something deeper. Christianity might be construed as a speculative system, but even so it was grounded in a moral and practical demand. Here again we find the Logos doctrine, as presented in the Gospel, broken through by the genuine tradition of the teaching of Jesus. Compelled by his philosophical assumptions to assign a central place to "knowledge," the evangelist maintains that the knowledge must be ethically conditioned. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

(3) Belief, knowledge, obedience,—the experience that leads up to life can be traced backwards through these successive stages. But behind them all there is one still more primary, at which the conscious activity of man merges itself in the operation of the divine will. We have already touched on that phase of Johannine thought which is expressed in such sayings as "No man can come to me unless the Father draw him." It would almost appear as if John accepted the Gnostic division of men into two classes, marked off from each other by a radical difference in their nature. The work of Christ, according to this doctrine, is not to offer life to all men, but to sift out from the miscellaneous mass the scattered "children of light." We have seen reason to deny that John maintains the doctrine to the full extent in which it appears in Gnosticism. In so far as he adopts it, his motive is not to limit the scope of salvation; possibly he was unconscious that his teaching, pushed to its logical consequence, would entail this limitation.

His aim, in the first place, is to account for a historical fact,—that only a small number out of that world to which Christ appealed, had offered a response to him. As in the Lord's own lifetime many had been called and few chosen, so in the age following the mass of men had been repelled by the same light that attracted others. With all the evidence before them that ought to have awakened them to true knowledge and belief, they had deliberately spurned the message. John solves

the riddle in the manner already suggested by Paul, through the doctrine of a divine election. Only, where Paul insists on the direct agency of God in choosing or rejecting, John makes use of the idea of predisposition on the part of men themselves. Some natures have an instinctive sympathy with the light, and are drawn to it when it becomes manifest; others are blind and unresponsive. Ultimately the difference has its ground in the will of God, but it is accounted for, in the first instance, by this inherent difference in human character.

Again, while John seeks to explain a historical fact, he wishes further to suggest the mystery which attends the great spiritual change. The transition from death to life is a very real experience, but we cannot fully explore its nature and causes. We can only say that God Himself has effected it by the agency of His Spirit. When all the outward conditions for attaining to the new life have been satisfied, there will still be those who continue in darkness. Some condition is wanting which they cannot supply by their own will and power, and which involves a "drawing" by God Himself.

Thus we arrive at the stage which marks the absolute beginning of the progress towards belief in Christ. Just as the natural life begins in birth, so the spiritual life has its commencement in a "new birth," or "birth from above" (both meanings are conveyed, with an evident intention, in the δεῖ ὑμᾶς γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν). Attempts have been made to derive the doctrine from various heathen sources,

chiefly from ideas connected with the mysteries. Indirectly, through their influence on the conception of Baptism, these ideas may have acted on the evangelist's thought, but the genesis of his doctrine can be explained apart from them. (*a*) Jesus had declared, in more than one familiar saying, that a man must become as a little child before he could enter into the kingdom of heaven. He demanded a new beginning, a radical "change of mind," and John intensifies both the image and its signification. Not only must a man return, as it were, to childhood, but he must undergo a new birth. Not only his moral temper but his nature itself must be renewed. (*b*) Paul speaks of the transition to faith in Christ as the putting off of the old and the putting on of the new man. In the light of his own peculiar experience he thought of the entrance into the Christian life as a sudden act, a change abrupt and final. He describes this change, it is true, not under the image of birth, but under other figures, chiefly derived from the death and resurrection of Christ, but none the less he suggests the idea, which John works out more fully, of a sudden, mysterious transition from the old life to the new. (*c*) The rite of Baptism, already regarded by Paul as the outward sign and guarantee of the inward change, had come to be invested with a yet higher value in the popular Christianity of a later age. The divine power was supposed to act through the visible ordinance. The change from the old to the new and spiritual life was in some real manner effected, as well as symbolised, by Baptism. We have seen that John

protests against the over-estimation of the mere external rite. He does not, however, break away from the popular conception, but sets himself to deepen and spiritualise it. For him, as for the Church at large, Baptism marks the beginning of the new life, and possesses in itself a mysterious efficacy; but a higher agency cooperates with the material element. The water is ineffectual except as the vehicle and instrument of the Spirit.

The doctrine of the New Birth has therefore a twofold genesis, from the authentic teaching of Jesus as supplemented and interpreted by Paul, and from the conception of Baptism which had evolved itself, largely under extra-Christian influences, in the later Church. Two strains of meaning are blended together in the doctrine, roughly corresponding to these two sources from which it is derived.

On the one hand, the demand of Jesus for a *μετάνοια*, a radical change of will and moral disposition, is repeated with a further emphasis. The teaching which appears so strange to Nicodemus is supported by an appeal to actual experience,—"We speak what we know, and testify what we have seen." John had been conscious in himself of a change effected in him through the Spirit of Christ, and had witnessed a similar change in the lives of others. A higher will took possession of those who yielded themselves to God as He came to them in Jesus Christ. They entered on a new life, under the influence of new motives and thoughts and desires. In this sense, which must be accepted as the fundamental one, the "birth from above" has

nothing to do with metaphysical doctrine. John is simply expressing, with the aid of a significant image, the fact which lies at the root of all Christian experience. The power of Christ, when it takes hold of a human life, effects a renewal of the whole moral nature. The fact is certain, although, as John indicates, it involves a mystery which can never be explained. We can only say that God works in the hearts of men through Jesus Christ. In ways that are beyond our tracing, like the motions of the wind, He breathes His Spirit into them and cleanses and renews them.

But, on the other hand, the simple religious conception is brought into relation with the mystical and philosophical ideas which colour the whole teaching of the Gospel. In place of the ethical change implied in our Lord's demand for a μετάνοια, John thinks of a transmutation of nature. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and in order that the gift of Christ may avail for him, man must be endowed miraculously with a higher capacity. Not so much his mind and will as the very substance out of which his being is formed, must become different. It is to be observed in the dialogue with Nicodemus, that the "Spirit" is not described under ethical categories. The contrast is between the "flesh," — the lower, earthly nature, — and the spiritual essence of God. Before man can hope to participate in the true life imparted through Christ, he must be wrought into affinity with the nature of spirit. His own will and effort are powerless to effect this change. He must undergo, in more than

a figurative sense, another birth through the immediate agency of God. John conceives of the mysterious change as accomplished in the rite of Baptism, in which the divine power uses a material element as its vehicle and so acts on the earthly nature of man. It is evident that the "Spirit" which thus becomes effective through a purely physical agency is ethically neutral. It represents nothing but a divine creative energy, which lays hold on the natural life and sublimates and re-fashions it. Henceforth the man is "born again," in the sense that he has been magically changed into a new creature, and possesses affinities, lacking in him before, with the supersensible world. He "cannot see the kingdom of God,"—he has no receptivity for the life imparted through Christ, till he has undergone this essential change of nature.

These, then, so far as we have yet traced them, are the different elements in the experience which has its ultimate outcome in Life. First there is the incalculable working of the Spirit of God, by which the earthly man is "born again" as a spiritual man. This birth from above is viewed under two aspects, as a magical, semi-physical change, and as a moral regeneration, answering to the μετάνοια of the Synoptic teaching. In virtue of its twofold character, it gives rise to two activities, different from each other yet interdependent. On the one hand, it manifests itself in a purer and more earnest morality. The regenerated man is enabled to do the deeds of the light, to will to obey the doctrine.

On the other hand, through the new sympathies with the higher world that have been awakened in him, he becomes capable of true knowledge; and his power of knowing is further enhanced by the practical moral activity which accompanies and conditions it. Finally, the whole antecedent process comes to a head in the act of belief. Jesus is recognised as the Son of God, and the believer's attitude to Him becomes one of entire acceptance and obedience.

The act of belief is so all-important that John repeatedly speaks of it as the one immediate condition of life. In a sense it is so. It brings the disciple into such a relation to Christ that His power as Life-giver becomes real and effectual. But the gift itself is imparted, not so much through the act of belief as through the fellowship with Christ of which it marks the commencement. We have now to consider the nature of that fellowship which follows inevitably on true belief, and which carries with it the communication of life.

It is necessary to remind ourselves, at the outset, that John conceives of life as of something which is actually embodied in the Person of Christ. Into this world of darkness and death He came as the living One, and in order to receive His gift we require to participate in His being and nature. The whole teaching of the Gospel is determined by this thought, that the life is bound up with the Person, and that the work of Christ consists in the last resort in the communication of Himself. The

problem which John attempts to solve is therefore a peculiarly complicated one, and involves him in mystical ideas which are hardly intelligible to our modern modes of thinking. It is not merely how Christ by His divine power can quicken those who believe in Him, but how He can impart His own life, how He can cause Himself to live again in His disciples. There are three main lines of thought by which John endeavours to explain this mystery of the transmission to the believer of the life that was in Christ.

(1) The belief in Christ is followed, in the first place, by a full acceptance of His message, as expressed in His spoken words. It might almost appear from the prominence assigned to the words of Jesus, that no more is implied by fellowship with Him than a whole-hearted assimilation of His teaching. "He said to those who believed on Him, If ye continue in My words, then are ye My disciples indeed" (viii. 31). "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life" (v. 24). "The words that I speak to you are spirit and life" (vi. 63). "Thou hast the words of eternal life" (vi. 68). "I have given to them the words that Thou gavest Me" (xvii. 8). "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you" (xv. 7). It might be gathered from such sayings that Jesus manifested Himself, like any other great teacher, in the truths concerning God and human duty to which He gave utterance, and that we receive *Him*, His essential mind and spirit, in the believing apprehension of His words. Doubtless

this view is continually present to the evangelist. To him, as to the early Church at large, Jesus was the great Teacher and Revealer. With his Hellenic sense of the value of knowledge, he was the more inclined to lay stress on the new truth imparted by Jesus, and to discover in it a main factor in the attainment of life. The ethical interest pervading the Gospel must likewise be taken into account. Jesus had laid down a new law of right living, on which the Christian community had based itself, and so far as His words had given expression to that law they afforded a nourishment and a quickening to His followers. But we must bear in mind the peculiar significance attached by John to the "words" of Jesus. The view of several modern critics, that the allusions to the "words" are everywhere tinged with the theological idea of the Logos, cannot be established with certainty. Once or twice we may detect a consciousness in the writer's mind that He who utters the words is Himself the eternal Word, but to construe all the references in this sense would involve us in many strained interpretations. This much, however, is certain, that the same Hebraic conception of the nature of God's word which forms an element in the Logos hypothesis, is present in the various allusions to the words of Jesus. In the Old Testament usage, a word, especially a divine word, is something real and active, not the mere utterance of thought, but itself a vehicle of living power. Through His word God communicates some part of Himself. His energy passes over into matter

previously dead, or into human souls, which are thereby awakened to new and higher activities. A similar quality is ascribed in the Gospel to the words of Jesus. They are not so much the expression of His thought as the emanation of His actual being and power. Through them He gave out His own living spirit, so that it could enter as the energy of a new life into the natures of men. The sayings quoted above will serve to illustrate this conception of the words of Jesus. "The words I speak unto you are spirit and life." "If My words abide in you." Not only because of the truth conveyed in them, but because Jesus spoke them, His words are life-giving. They contain in them something of Himself. They are like the creative words of God which are instinct with the divine will and power, and quicken what was lying dead.

Through the act of belief, then, it becomes possible to appropriate the words of Christ, while the refusal to discern in Him the Son of God makes His word ineffectual or changes its activity into one of judgment. The whole controversy with the Jews, which occupies the middle section of the Gospel, turns upon this idea, that the word which in itself is life-giving is rendered fruitless or condemnatory when those who hear it are unbelieving. On the other hand, the acceptance of Christ opens a channel for the entrance of His word. The inward belief cooperates with the word received from without, and enables it to exert its true power in the quickening of a higher life. "I

have given them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me" (xvii. 8).

(2) The assimilation of the words of Jesus is only the beginning, however, of that complete fellowship with Him which is life. The words, pregnant with spirit and life, are in a manner Himself, and He can say in one breath, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you"; yet His living Person, in its totality, is more than His words. How is it possible, through the act of belief, to incorporate ourselves with Christ in such a way that His Life may become ours? John attempts a solution of the riddle by means of His mystical theory of the Church and the Eucharist. As a visible personality Jesus has departed, but He is still present in the community of His people, having entered through death on a larger existence as real as that in which He first revealed Himself. And in the confession of belief in Him as the Son of God we become members of the community in which He lives and exerts His power. We have part, more especially, in the sacramental rite which He bequeathed to His Church as the perpetual symbol and guarantee of His presence. Reference has been made already to the several ideas which are blended together in John's conception of the Eucharist, and these must all be taken into account in any true and adequate interpretation. Certainly the crude Sacramentalism of the later Church, which largely based itself on

the Johannine teaching, neglected many elements in it, and these among the most important. Yet it cannot fairly be denied that one side at least of the evangelist's thought was represented in the later doctrine. To him also the bread and wine had a real validity. In more than a symbolical sense they stood for the flesh and blood, the actual Person, of Christ, who thus made it possible that believers in all times and places should participate in Himself. Only by a mystical doctrine of this nature could John overcome the difficulty that was involved in his view of life as a semi-physical essence. For the transmission of life, as so conceived, there needed to be some means by which the higher substance, resident in the body of Christ, might in a real and literal sense be assimilated by the believer. In the Eucharist, the central and most mysterious act of Christian worship, John discerned the means by which this miracle is effected. The bread and wine not only symbolise, but in some inexplicable sense are, the body and blood of Christ. He continues through the ever-repeated rite the great work for which the Father sent Him, of imparting Himself for the life of the world.

(3) In His words, in the mystery of the Eucharist, Christ offers Himself to His people; but something further is necessary before they can fully participate in His eternal life. He requires that they should enter into a relation of permanent union with Him, abiding in Him continually, like

the branches in the vine. This doctrine of a mystical union, in which the higher life flows uninterruptedly from Christ to the believer, contains the central and characteristic thought of the Fourth Gospel. It cannot be discussed in its whole significance apart from those conceptions of the Spirit and the ever-living Christ which will occupy us in later chapters. For the present it will be enough to indicate that two ideas, essentially disparate, are involved together in the doctrine of union with Christ.

On the one hand, John proceeds on the assumption that life is a higher sort of being, which resides in Christ as the divine Logos. It cannot be imparted to men except by a process of direct transmission. The earthly nature must ground itself in the Logos nature, and become inwardly identified with it. Such an image, therefore, as that of the vine and the branches, has more than a figurative value to the mind of John. He conceives that in some real, though mysterious, sense the believer is united to Christ as the branch is to the vitalising stem, and so draws into himself a continual nourishment. Life as it manifests itself in the disciples is nothing but the life of Christ, apart from whom they can do nothing. The union is in its nature inexplicable, and John does not attempt to describe how it is effected. Sometimes he appears to think of Christ as dwelling within the believer, as an unseen spiritual presence, a fountain of living water. More often he speaks of the believer as abiding in Christ, grafted on

to Him as the great life-giving stem. But the idea expressed in the many different images is that of a semi-physical relation of such a kind that the higher nature is continually transfused into the lower. Assuming, as he does, that life is a diviner essence, John is compelled to this conception of the union through which it is imparted. Fellowship with Christ in the purely moral and religious sense, would not of itself suffice for the communication of eternal life.

We have seen, however, that the metaphysical view of life, involved in the Logos hypothesis, is interwoven throughout with another, which belongs to the region of actual Christian experience. John was conscious in himself of a new spiritual energy awakened in him by Christ. He saw the difference which Christ had made in the disciples who had been gathered to Him out of the world,—a difference only comparable to the passing from death to life. It was not enough to explain this quickening as the result of the higher ethic proclaimed by Jesus and accepted by His followers. Mere teaching, preserved in books and traditions, cannot be a source of life-giving power. What Jesus had communicated was His own mind and spirit—something of His very self. He had made it possible for His disciples to become one with Him, and share His knowledge of God and the temper with which He had overcome the world. The real problem which John set himself to solve was at its centre a purely religious one. How can Jesus, who long since departed from our sight, be

still the same to us as He was to His immediate disciples? How can we enter into such a personal relation with Him that we may participate in His life?

The greatness of the Fourth Gospel consists in this, that it takes us back to the living Person of Jesus as the ultimate force in Christianity. There was a danger in the period immediately following the apostolic age that the religion of Christ would soon cease to bear any vital relation to its Founder. Already in the incipient Gnostic systems He was regarded abstractly as the medium of a revelation which could now be apprehended apart from Him. His earthly life was thrown into the background, and reduced to a mere appearance, in order to give larger room for what appeared the permanent substance of His message. John perceived that a religion thus severed from Christ Himself would be emptied of its real content and power. It was the life which had been the Light of men. Jesus had been a Saviour to the first generation of His people, not so much through His doctrine or His actual work, as through the impression produced on them by His living personality. And there must still be this immediate relation between Christ and His disciples if the miracle of the first age was to repeat itself. Only as we receive Christ Himself, as we dwell in His presence and assimilate His very spirit, do we become partakers of the divine gift bestowed through Him. This is the sovereign thought of the Fourth Gospel, and in spite of the alien speculation with which it is

entangled it is everywhere impressed on us with a matchless power and grandeur. The life was in Christ Himself; we must grow one with Him by a direct and personal fellowship before it can live again in us.

The thought is elaborated by John in his record of Christ's intercourse with His twelve disciples. He describes how the "belief" elicited in them by the first miracle (ii. 11) drew them gradually into an ever deeper and more intimate relation to their Master. As the world was repelled from Him, the few whom He had chosen learned to understand and serve Him with a fuller and fuller sympathy. At last He could declare, "I call you henceforth not servants, but friends; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (xv. 15). They no longer obeyed Him mechanically, but were united to Him by an inward harmony of will. They knew His mind intuitively, because they were one with Him in spirit and shared His thoughts and motives. As yet, while they were divided from Him by earthly limitations, the union could only be defined as "friendship," but it would become closer and more real after His death. Returning to His glory, He would come to them again, not as an outward friend, but as an inward presence with whom they could abide inseparably.

It is evident that in this strain of thought, which finds its highest expression in the Supper

discourses, John departs altogether from the theory of a mystical, semi-physical union with Christ. He thinks of the true life as Jesus exemplified it in His life of holiness and love and self-sacrifice; by participating in that spirit of Jesus men become God's children, and pass out of darkness into light. He realises, moreover, that something more is necessary than obedience to a new moral law. The higher life represented by Jesus is bound up indissolubly with His own personality. It was *His* life, and it cannot reproduce itself in His followers until they are inwardly identified with Him, possessed of the self-same will and spirit that dwelt in Christ. "Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man, ye have no life in you." These words of the Eucharistic discourse are meant, as we have seen, to bear a spiritual as well as a literal interpretation. They express with a startling boldness the fundamental thought of the Gospel,—that to share in the life of Christ we must become one with Him, for apart from Him we can do nothing.

Regarded from this side, the doctrine of union with Christ is purely ethical and religious. The evangelist no longer thinks of life as a higher essence, imparted magically through the influx of the heavenly nature into the earthly. To be united with Christ is to enter into living fellowship with Him—into fellowship so real and intimate that His mind becomes our mind. Paul had declared already, "I live, and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me," and his experience had been

repeated, even more fully and consciously, in the life of John. He had so yielded himself to the unseen Lord that he felt as if he had no longer any separate being. He was one with Christ, whose spirit was in him like a well of water, springing up into eternal life.

So to the grand question of his Gospel, How can the life in Christ become life in us? John offers a twofold answer. The life is itself conceived in two modes,—metaphysically in accordance with the Logos hypothesis, and ethically in the light of the historical revelation. It follows, as a necessary consequence, that the doctrine of the communication of life assumes two different forms, which only on the surface are made to appear identical. In both alike the chief requirement is union with Christ. But this union is, in the one case, a magical transaction, involving a relation to Christ which is almost physical in its nature. In the other case it is grounded in a moral fellowship, such as was experienced by the first disciples. This latter view must be held to constitute the real and underlying thought of John, and the other is only an attempt, necessarily imperfect, to adapt it to the demands of an alien philosophy. In Jesus Christ, as He revealed Himself to man, is life; and to obtain that life we must enter into a personal communion with Him, abiding in Him like the branches in the vine.

CHAPTER X

THE RETURN OF CHRIST

JOHN, like the Synoptic writers, presents his work in the form of a historical narrative. It records the chief actions and sayings of Jesus, describes His intercourse with His disciples, and His rejection by the unbelieving world, and closes, after the manner of the other Gospels, with the story of His death and Resurrection. But throughout this narrative of events we are conscious at every step of a further intention. In the Christ who lived and died John recognises the Eternal Christ who has passed into the unseen, and is still present to His people as truly as when He dwelt among them in the flesh. The earthly life is regarded as the type or microcosm of this larger life. It would scarcely be too much to say that the history which forms the ostensible subject of his Gospel is only of secondary interest to our evangelist. His real aim is to elucidate, in the light of the history, the abiding facts of Christian experience.

This must not be understood to imply that he sublimates the actual life of Jesus into a kind of allegory. On the contrary, it is all-essential to his purpose to establish the reality of the visible

appearance. The higher life cannot be imparted to men except through one who has come out from God, and yet has truly united himself with man's earthly nature. On this fundamental fact, that once in a given place and time the Word appeared as flesh, the whole argument of the Gospel rests. But that first revelation of the Word would have little meaning unless it pointed, in some manner, to a permanent revelation. If the life was still to be communicated to believers in all ages, they must have immediate access, like the original disciples, to the source of life. They must have the assurance that the Christ whom they could only know in an inward experience was identical with Jesus who had once been manifest outwardly as the Son of God. The evangelist seeks so to present the earthly appearance as to convince his readers that it was more than an isolated fact. In this Jesus who had once revealed Himself in history they might recognise Him who was still with them as an unseen presence. The larger life on which He had now entered was only the continuation of the life begun on earth, and was no less real and personal.

Instead, therefore, of resolving the history into shadow and allegory, John insists on its reality, in order to claim a like reality for the spiritual manifestation that had followed it. No view of the Gospel could be more mistaken than that which regards it as moving wholly in a world of abstract ideas. It is written as a protest against the idealising tendency which sought to dissipate Christianity into a vague speculation. From the abstractions

of the current theology the evangelist goes back to the primitive record, and describes how the revelation came to men in Jesus of Nazareth. There could be no question of the concrete reality of that life, which shared in our human conditions and was outwardly visible to all men. And the Christ who was still working for the world's salvation was as much a real presence as He had been in those first days. He was not to be dissolved into a theological idea or a phantasm of the religious imagination. So we may regard the Gospel as vindicating, for the inward knowledge of Christ, an equal validity with that outward and palpable knowledge enjoyed by the first disciples. "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." They also can enter into real fellowship with the same Jesus who once appeared in the flesh, and participate in His eternal life.

The general intention of the evangelist is thus similar to that of Paul. He likewise starts from a purely spiritual experience of Christ, for which he claims a real validity. The Lord who had appeared to him, as to one born out of due time, was He whom his fellow-apostles had known in the flesh. His right to the office of apostleship was equal to theirs, since he also had held personal communion with Jesus, not outwardly, yet no less truly and immediately. Paul, however, in his desire to assert the reality of his inward experience, leaves the earthly life of Jesus entirely to a side. He reasons, that to one who knew the exalted Christ the contem-

plation of the mere bygone history was superfluous. "Though I have known Christ after the flesh, now I know Him no more." The value of the earthly life was that it prepared the way for the exalted life, and to ponder on it now would only obscure the mind to that higher vision. By separating thus sharply between the two phases of Christ's revelation, Paul to a large extent defeats his own purpose. Maintaining as he does that the Christ of faith is identical with the Christ of history, he yet creates the impression that they are in some way different. The appearance in space and time has little to teach us about the character and the work of Him who is now revealed more perfectly. We cannot but feel that Paul's conception of Christ, however intensely realised, is somewhat abstract and impersonal. It is difficult to recognise the features of the historical Jesus in the glorified Being who has manifested himself to Paul.

John has learned to appreciate the earthly life of Jesus in something of its true significance. He believes, with Paul, that those who have not seen may yet enter into real communion with the Lord, and know Him in some respects more clearly and fully than His actual disciples. But this knowledge must begin with the contemplation of His life as it was once lived in the flesh. That life is the visible guarantee of what He is for ever, and we must constantly go back upon it if the unseen Christ who is with us still is to be something more to us than a mystical imagination. The inward experience, the historical reminiscence, these two are equally

necessary, and explain and complete one another. John therefore, instead of disregarding the earthly life, takes it as the basis of his exposition of the larger activity of Christ. He teaches us to discover in the Jesus who once appeared in human form, the same Lord whom we have known for ourselves in the inward communion of faith.

In two ways he adapts the historical narrative to this wider purpose. (1) He so records the several incidents as to give them the double import of facts and symbols. The history becomes, so to speak, transparent, so that through it all we can discern the spiritual work of Jesus as well as the outward events of His life. The feeding of the five thousand is like a parable of the giving of the bread of life. The healing of the blind man is no isolated miracle, but the type of the true light breaking in on the darkened world. That no doubt may remain of the deeper import of those actions of Jesus, they are followed in every case by a discourse in which they are plainly interpreted. Even in His lifetime Christ appears as we know Him now, the dispenser of spiritual gifts, whose activity is inward and invisible.

(2) It was impossible, however, under the conditions of a narrative which should in any measure reflect reality, to present adequately the Christ of spiritual experience. John has recourse, therefore, to direct statement in the form of prophetic allusion. Such allusions are scattered everywhere in the Gospel, and are prominent most of all in the great Supper discourses. Here Jesus, left alone with

those who believed on Him and could enter into His thought with a true sympathy, tells of the new revelation which He would make to them after He was glorified. He "speaks no more in parables," but declares openly how He would abide with men in an unseen eternal fellowship. In these chapters the evangelist is able to escape from the restraints imposed on him by the narrative form of his work. He gives full utterance to his deeper thought,—that Jesus who once appeared in the flesh is also that spiritual presence who is still manifest to His own.

The Supper discourses form the Johannine counterpart to those Apocalyptic chapters which in the other Gospels precede the story of the Passion. There also Jesus, before He closes His life-work, throws His mind into the future, and shadows out the history of His Church and His own coming again in glory. The passages in question, embodying as they undoubtedly do some genuine tradition of the thought of Jesus, bear evident traces of the great hope which animated the primitive Church. The theology of Paul himself is modified, to an extent which criticism has hardly yet appreciated, by the expectation of Christ's second coming. The Return was looked for in the immediate future, and was conceived, under imagery borrowed from Jewish Apocalyptic, as a triumphal advent, amidst clouds of glory, of the Lord who was henceforth to reign. In the Apostolic age and for some time afterwards, this splendid expectation was the inspiring force in the Church's life; but as years passed on, and it still remained unfulfilled, there came a

period of doubt and depression. The closing verse of Revelation bears pathetic witness to the sickness of hope deferred which was stealing into the hearts of many. It began to appear as if the whole activity of the Church had been based on an illusion. Christ had departed, and if He returned it would be at some far distant day, which those who had looked for Him so earnestly would never see.

The frustration of the hope led for the most part to despair and apathy. In the more ardent minds it induced an unhealthy fanaticism. Such minds refused to accept the apparent fact, and clung more blindly and vehemently to their expectation of the Lord's coming, the more it seemed improbable. They thought to compel the great day by redoubling their certainty of it, and heightening the traditional picture of its character. The movement which culminated in Montanism had already begun in the early years of the second century, and constituted a serious danger to the Church. The real aims of the Christian life were lost sight of under the strain of a morbid excitement. Christian ideas were at the same time materialised. A millennial world such as is described in the well-known passage of Papias took the place of the true kingdom of God, which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

It can hardly be questioned that the idea of the Return of Christ is a central theme in John, as in the Synoptics and Paul. He wrote, however, not as they had done, under the living influence of the hope, but in the later age when it had ceased to be

a real power in the life of the Church. His readers were those who had either abandoned it, and along with it much of their faith and ardour, or who maintained it when it could only pervert instead of nourishing their zeal for Christ. At the same time, the idea of the Parousia had entered so deeply into Christian tradition, so many of the doctrines and claims of the Church had been bound up with it, that John could not simply set it aside as illusory ; — to do so in that critical age of transition would have imperilled, perhaps have undermined, the whole structure of Christianity. Nor has John any desire to break away from it. He perceives that although in its crude immediate form it had proved vain, it yet enshrined a great spiritual truth. Even for Paul and his fellow-apostles, whom it had seemingly disappointed, it had in a deeper sense been fulfilled. The Lord had answered their hope and come to them again,—not on the clouds of heaven as they anticipated, but no less really and gloriously.

Instead, therefore, of discarding the idea of a Return of Christ, John reinterprets it in accordance with his own conceptions, and so retains for it a central place in Christian faith. The real Parousia has taken place already. It followed immediately on the departure of Christ, when through His death He reassumed His glory. Set free from the limitations of earthly, bodily existence, He was able to reveal Himself, as an unseen presence, to each individual believer, and not in transitory fashion, but permanently. To the mind of the evangelist this is no explaining away of the hope of the

Parousia, no attempt to read a figurative meaning into it, since it had failed in the world of fact. He maintains, on the contrary, that the expectation has been fulfilled in even a more real and satisfying sense than the popular belief had attached to it. Jesus had returned in very truth, and if His people had been disappointed it was only because they had mistaken the nature of His coming.

Many of the allusions in the Supper discourses first become intelligible, when we realise that John is seeking to replace the current expectation of an outward Parousia, by His own more spiritual conception. He indicates that in three ways the Church had misunderstood the promise of Christ. (1) In the first place, it had failed to perceive that the second coming was to follow immediately on the exaltation. Jesus had spoken of "a little time," and this had been construed as meaning an interval more or less extended. Latterly, as years passed by and the great day never seemed to come, the Church was resigning itself to a watch indefinitely long, or else was despairing altogether of any fulfilment to the promise. "Some of the disciples said among themselves, What is this that He saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see Me; and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me? What is this little while? We cannot tell what He saith" (xvi. 17, 18). Such a passage vividly reflects the questioning that had arisen in the second and third generations of the Church's history, in view of the long delay of Christ's reappearance. The answer

is contained in the simile from childbirth (20–22), which turns on the suddenness of the transition from a great sorrow to a great joy. The "little time" is only the dark interval between the Lord's Passion and His Ascension to the Father. The joy of reunion with Him will immediately begin after that brief agony, and will continue without interruption for ever.

(2) Again, the Church had taken for granted that the Return of which Christ had spoken was to be outwardly manifest. As He had come at first in a visible body, so He would appear a second time, clothed in glory, and every eye would see Him. This open manifestation was to vindicate the Church's faith to the unbelieving world. But John discovers here the chief reason why the hope of the Parousia had apparently been frustrated. Men had been expecting what was in its nature impossible, for Jesus could reveal Himself only to those who loved Him and believed in Him. In His larger spiritual life He was to be spiritually discerned, and the "children of darkness" were necessarily blind to Him. "Judas saith unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself to us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto Him and make Our abode with Him" (xiv. 22, 23). The second coming had indeed been fulfilled, but it consisted in the inward revelation of Christ to the believer. "He that loveth Me, I will love him, and will manifest Myself unto him" (xiv. 21).

(3) Once more, the Parousia, according to the popular belief, was the Lord's coming back for His people. He had left them for an interval to labour and struggle on this earth, while He took possession of His kingdom; but He had not forgotten them, and in due time would return in glory and gather to Himself those who had faithfully served Him. Paul is confident, almost to the very end, that he will not require to pass into the other world by the gateway of physical death. The Lord will return for His people, "and we that are alive shall be caught up into the clouds to meet Him in the air, and so we shall be ever with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 17). John recognises that here also the Church had mistaken the true import of Christ's promise. He had indeed spoken of a day when He would return for His people. He would come again and receive them unto Himself, that where He was they might be also. But such utterances did not imply that at some definite time, in a visible outward manner, he would transport them into some heavenly place. The eternal life may begin here and now; and while still in the body the believer may enter into the promised fellowship with the unseen Christ.

It is true that in several passages of the Supper discourses there would seem to be a double allusion, to a passing after death into the "house of many abodes," as well as to a spiritual reunion with Christ. But the latter thought is the pervading and determining one. When Jesus prays, "Father, I will that those also whom Thou hast given Me

be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory" (xvii. 24), He is not thinking primarily of a future meeting with His disciples in heaven. He is rather completing the train of thought which opens with the verse (15), "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world." Against the popular conception of an outward Parousia, in which Christ would gather His disciples into His place of glory, the evangelist sets a deeper and more spiritual conception. Those who love Christ and believe in Him are reunited with Him already. He has come back for them, and taken them to dwell in heavenly places with Himself.

The hope of the Parousia is thus adopted in all its outstanding features, and at the same time corrected, and interpreted in a new sense. Christ had already returned, not in visible glory manifest to the whole world, but as an inward presence, known to those who loved Him. He had taken His disciples to Himself, giving them entrance even now into that eternal world whither He had gone. Out of the crude Apocalyptic hope of the primitive age John educes an idea of permanent value and fruitfulness.

Before discussing this idea a little more fully in its significance for the Johannine theology as a whole, we have to take account of one all-important question. How is the second coming related to the historical fact of the Resurrection? In the primitive belief the two events were conceived as altogether distinct. The rising from the dead, while it marked the transition between the two

phases of Christ's existence, formed part of the earthly history. It was the triumphant close by which the Lord revealed Himself in His true character before He finally ascended into His state of glory. An interval was to elapse before the second part of the great drama was to open, in the return of Christ as the world's King and Judge. In the Fourth Gospel the two episodes of Resurrection and Parousia appear to be blended together. The earthly life reaches its natural close in the death ("It is finished!"), which is followed by the "little while" of absence and waiting. Then in His Resurrection Jesus comes back to His disciples, never more to leave them, and is acknowledged by them as their Lord and their God.

There is, however, a curious survival of the primitive belief which assumed an interval, longer or shorter, between the Resurrection and the Return. It is suggested by the words of Jesus to Mary (xx. 17), "Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go unto My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father; and to My God, and your God." Here the Ascension, which in the first chapter of Acts marks the definite departure of Jesus from the earth, is placed immediately after the first appearance to Mary. When Jesus appears again that same evening to His disciples He no longer forbids them to touch Him; on His next appearance He Himself invites Thomas to feel the pierced hands and side. Since the meeting with Mary, His Ascension had been accomplished. He had passed through the

mysterious, transitional state of being, when He held Himself aloof from men ; and had come back to abide with them. The Parousia is thus separated from the Resurrection by a scarcely perceptible interval, and even this is bridged over by the meeting in which He is seen and heard by Mary, although He withdraws Himself from her touch. We can scarcely be wrong in perceiving here one of John's concessions to the primitive tradition, which he sought to conserve in form, even while in substance he broke with it. His own interpretation allowed no room for an Ascension such as is described by the writer of Acts. He thought of the rising from the dead as at once Christ's entrance into glory and His return in power to the waiting disciples. But he endeavours to reconcile his thought as far as might be with the received doctrine of the Church, and suggests, without precisely indicating, a formal act of Ascension to the right hand of God.

This recognition of the orthodox belief does not, however, affect the substance of John's own characteristic thought. He departs from the traditional doctrine that the rising from the dead was followed, after a short interval of reunion, by a definite withdrawal into heaven, and that this again was preparatory to a second coming, at some unknown time in the future. The three moments, Resurrection, Ascension, Parousia, are all merged in one another. The return of Jesus to His Father was at the same time His entrance on that larger activity in which He manifested Himself again to His disciples. By His death He had over-

come the earthly barriers, and His rising from the dead marked the commencement of His larger, exalted life. The Resurrection and the Return are practically identical, therefore, to the mind of our evangelist, and his view of both of them is profoundly modified by his thus blending them together.

(1) The exalted life of Christ is immediately related to the earthly life, which it continues under larger conditions, but otherwise without change or interruption. In the popular belief, the Ascension implied a transition to an entirely new state of being. We have seen that even Paul, convinced though he was that the heavenly Lord was one with the historical Jesus, determined not to know Him as He had been in the flesh. Such knowledge could only hinder him in his effort to discern the glorified life, which had become essentially different from that earthly one. The whole drift of the primitive theology was to enhance the present exaltation of Christ by detaching it as far as possible from the first appearance in weakness. The Parousia was to be the triumphant evidence that He who had humbled Himself and suffered, had now ascended and clothed Himself in the attributes of glory and power. There was a danger that in this sharp opposition of the two phases of Christ's existence the sense of a real continuity might be obscured. The Jesus of history, the Jesus of the Parousia who was the object of the Church's worship, were conceived almost as two distinct persons, with only a name in common.

By suppressing the interval between the Resur-

rection and the second coming, John seeks to affirm the identity of the exalted Lord with the Jesus who had revealed Himself in the flesh. The Incarnation had been more than a transient disguise which the Logos had now thrown off, in order to reassume His life with God. It was rather the beginning of a new mode in His existence, and He carried with Him into the unseen world the same human personality through which men had known Him on earth. This is the evident intention of the passage alluded to above, in which the Lord invites His doubting disciple to touch the wounds in His hands and side. His body had indeed been released from the earthly conditions (witness the passing through the closed doors), but it was still the same body. The Lord had come again, not in some new, unfamiliar character, but the same as He had ever been; and those who had entered most deeply into the meaning of His earthly life would know Him best as He now was in His glory. This is a thought that lies very near the heart of John's theology. He could only bring it into clear prominence by suppressing the interval between the rising from the dead and the Parousia, and making the two events coincident. The reassumption of His body, which fulfilled Christ's life on earth and formed an integral moment in it, was at the same time His return as the exalted Lord, who would dwell with His people for ever.

(2) The Resurrection itself is placed in a new light by standing thus in immediate relation to the Parousia. Its significance ceases to consist, as it

did to Paul (cf. Rom. i. 4) in the triumphant proof of the divine character of Jesus which it afforded. In the view of John the preceding life had rendered such proof unnecessary: the Father had already borne witness to the Son. Nor did the rising from the dead imply any essential change in the dignity or the nature of Jesus. He had been invested, even in His earthly ministry, with the attributes of God. The continuity of His life was in no wise broken by the transition through physical death to another state of being. The Resurrection, as John conceives it, had its chief significance in this,—that it marked the beginning of the wider activity of Jesus. He had come again, to pursue His chosen work under larger conditions. He had thrown off the restrictions to which He had submitted Himself for a few years, and would henceforth be present to all believers, in every place and time, as He had once been to His immediate followers. Identified thus with the Parousia (the inward, spiritual Parousia which takes the place of the Apocalyptic hope), the fact of the Resurrection becomes subordinate to its ideal import. The fact is indeed accepted, and even emphasised as against a false docetic interpretation; but we are made to realise that it has meaning and value, in so far as it is much more than an isolated fact. As Jesus passed through the closed doors into the midst of His disciples, so He comes to His people continually, no longer divided from them by material obstacles. As he revealed Himself to Mary by the speaking of her name, so He calls to us still in intimate personal

communion, and our own hearts witness to us that it is the Lord. The historical appearance of the risen Christ to His followers half resolves itself into a type of His permanent revelation of Himself. His Resurrection was also his Return, and this return of which the disciples were the first witnesses is ever and again repeated in the experience of all who have learned to believe in Him. That such is the evangelist's meaning is more than implied in the incident of the meeting with Thomas, and the words that accompany it. Thomas could not recognise the risen Lord till he had actually seen and touched Him. The Resurrection that enforced belief on him was the visible, historical fact of the rising from the grave. "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (xx. 29). The experience of those future believers would be as real and valid as this of Thomas. They would also in a true sense witness the Resurrection, which was more than a given fact in bygone history. The Lord would rise again as often as He returned, in inward fellowship, to those who know and love Him.

The Parousia, therefore, is taken out of its Apocalyptic setting, and identified with the return of Christ in that larger spiritual activity on which He had entered through His death. John seeks to show that the coming of the exalted Lord, in Christian experience, will be just as real as the visible coming, and will accomplish the divine

purpose even more adequately. "Those who have not seen and yet have believed" are in a true sense more blessed than those who saw. They also have an immediate, personal access to the Lord, but He reveals Himself to them more intimately, more fully.

(1) The coming of Christ in the Parousia will be universal,—no longer restricted by the conditions of space and time. All believers will have the same opportunity of knowing Him and communing with Him as had hitherto been enjoyed by the limited circle of personal disciples. There were other sheep not of this fold, "children of God scattered abroad," whom the Saviour could not gather in till He had entered on His larger, invisible life. His disciples who had known Him in the flesh would "weep and lament" over the momentary parting, but "the world would rejoice." The Lord would withdraw Himself in order to return as an all-pervading presence, for the accomplishment of His world-wide work. His earthly life was like the seed which is buried for a time, only to reappear in a fuller and grander form and "bring forth much fruit" (xii. 24). This universalism of John has, as we have seen, its practical limitations, but potentially it embraces the whole world. Jesus since His return in glory was present everywhere. He was able to manifest Himself to His people through whatever distant lands they might be scattered, and to unite them in one common Church.

(2) In His second coming Jesus will be more to His disciples than He was at first, since He will henceforth be an inward presence. His sojourn with

them in an actual human body, while it seemed to make Him nearer and more real to them, had been a barrier against a true and complete intercourse. They could only know Him outwardly, and their fellowship with Him was necessarily interrupted, and liable to many obstructions and misunderstandings. In the Supper discourses He speaks of a new relation into which He has already taken them, and which cannot be fully perfected till after His death. He has "called them not servants but friends," and this friendship is to grow into something yet deeper. "If a man love Me,—My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (xiv. 23). "I in them, and Thou in Me" (xvii. 23). The conditions of earthly existence had prevented an entire and intimate union between Christ and His people, but in His new life He would enter into their very hearts and impart Himself wholly to them. He would be the same Christ as they had known hitherto, partially and externally, but they would be able to commune with Him as with their own souls. The "friendship" would become an inward union, in which the distinction of "you" and "I" would pass away.

(3) The second coming of Christ, as distinguished from His brief earthly sojourn, will be permanent. This idea, that the Lord when He returns will depart no more, may be described as the chief motive of the Supper discourses. The approaching separation by death is the dark background which throws into clear relief the abiding nature of that new fellowship which is soon to be

inaugurated. "Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (xvi. 22). "I will that those whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am" (xvii. 24). The transitory life in which an intercourse, fitful at the best, was finally broken off by death would give place to an eternal reunion. The permanence is viewed throughout under two aspects. First, to the individual believer Christ will be for ever present, so that it will be possible to abide in Him in never-ceasing fellowship, as the branch abides in the vine. And again, He will abide with His Church through all the ages to come. There will be no fear of another separation after the Lord has returned in His larger, exalted life. He will not only "tabernacle" with men, but will "make His abode with them."

Omnipresence, inwardness, permanence,—these are the three marks by which the Lord's second coming will be distinguished from the first; and new phases of His activity are thus rendered possible which were either excluded by the conditions of His earthly life or could only manifest themselves imperfectly. John lays a special emphasis on the efficacy that would henceforth belong to prayer. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (xiv. 13). In virtue of the closer union with a Lord now exalted, the believer would prevail with God, as Jesus Himself had done in His life on earth (cf. xi. 42). A difficulty might seem to be involved in the striking passage (xvi. 23, 24),

where Jesus prefaces His promise that everything asked for in His name will be granted, with the words, "In that day ye shall ask Me nothing." The apparent contradiction, however, is only a surface one. Jesus would say that hereafter, when His disciples have entered into complete union with Him, they will lose the sense that He is intermediary between them and the Father. They will be so identified with Him that all prayer of theirs will be the prayer of Christ Himself, offered immediately to God. As such it cannot fail to be granted, since the Father's will is always one with the Son's. And this higher efficacy of prayer is only one side of the new power which will accrue to the disciples through the presence with them of the ascended Lord. The mantle of His own divine energy will fall upon them. "He that believeth on Me, the works that I do will he do also; because I go to the Father" (xiv. 12). Such an allusion to the work of the disciples as a continuation, under larger conditions, of the work of Christ Himself, throws a light on the real significance of the miracles recorded in the Gospel. The feeding of the multitude, the healings wrought on the blind and palsied, were symbolical of the spiritual power of Christ, and in this sense would be repeated, on a grander scale, in the life of His Church.

Along with the increase of power the disciples will attain to a more perfect knowledge. The Gospel is pervaded with the thought that in His first coming Christ could not adequately reveal Himself. He had to express His truth under

the image of "earthly things." He had many things to say which men could not yet receive, and even the words He spoke could not be rightly understood until long afterwards. But His return as an inward presence would open the way to a truer intercourse in which He could fully manifest Himself. "These things I have spoken unto you in parables, but the time cometh when I shall speak no more in parables, but I shall show you plainly of the Father" (xvi. 25). "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter" (xiii. 7). "Hereafter ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (i. 51). This thought, that Christ is nearer and more clearly revealed to the believing heart since His Return than when He lived on earth, is indeed the justification of the Fourth Gospel. The evangelist, who has never seen Christ in the flesh, is conscious that he can understand Him and reproduce His inmost mind even more truly than those who in the literal sense beheld Him. He has enjoyed the more intimate communion with the unseen, exalted Lord. He is able to interpret the "parables" in the light of "heavenly things."

The hope of the Parousia, which in itself belonged to a primitive and bygone phase of Christian doctrine, is thus revived by the Fourth Evangelist, under certain characteristic modifications. Not only so, but a place is assigned to it hardly less cardinal than that which it occupies in the theology of Paul. The reason of this

becomes apparent when we remember that the Gospel centres in the idea of the communication of life, through personal union with Christ. The life was present in Christ Himself. It could be imparted by Him to His people only by an immediate fellowship, a direct appropriation of His "flesh and blood," His actual Person. Even those who knew Him during His brief earthly appearance could not enter into this life-giving union with Him until He had returned, as an inward, spiritual presence. It was only then that He whom they had known externally as Master or Friend could overcome all barriers and make Himself one with them. And to those who had not seen and yet had believed, to the great multitude of disciples in the after ages, the original coming of Christ was meaningless unless it was the earnest of a second coming, no less real and valid than the first. Life could not be imparted to them except through a direct communion with the Life-giver. They needed the assurance that they also, who were divided by long intervals of time from the historical Jesus, had a personal access to Him and could participate in His divine life. Departed as He was from the visible scene, He was yet eternally present, revealing and imparting Himself to His own.

The return of Jesus to His disciples is conditioned, as we have seen, by His return through death to the Father. He reassumed the glory which He shared with God before the world was (xvii. 5), and in that same act He became omnipresent like God. No formal Parousia, in the

Apocalyptic sense, was necessary, since the one return of itself implied the other. And since Jesus was present with His disciples in all times and places, because He was now reunited with God, their fellowship with Him was a fellowship with God Himself. "As Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us. The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; I in them and Thou in Me" (xvii. 21–23).

The Fourth Gospel may be said to culminate in this magnificent conception of God Himself eternally present in the believer, through Christ who unites us with Himself as He is united with God. The conception is indeed reached along the lines of a metaphysic which in itself is alien to the Christian teaching. The union of Christ with God is interpreted in terms of the Logos theory, which substitutes an abstract, philosophical relation of being for the relation of love and faith reflected to us in the actual life of Jesus. In like manner the intercourse of Christ with the believer is obscured, by the idea of life as an essence which cannot be transmitted except in a semi-physical union. But we can recognise that under the categories of an alien philosophy John is striving to set forth the facts of a profound religious experience. "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." He was conscious of a living fellowship with Christ which had meant life and peace and illumination to him; and the assurance was given him that in this fellowship with Christ he had entered into communion with God Himself.

CHAPTER XI

THE HOLY SPIRIT

IN the same farewell discourse which contains the promise of His own return, Jesus foretells the coming of another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth. Not a few of the expositors of the Gospel, both in early and recent times, have discovered the very core of its teaching in these prophecies of the future activity of the Spirit. It may, indeed, be granted that no other Johannine doctrine has exercised a profounder influence on the whole course of theological development; but it does not follow that John himself recognised the full significance of his conception. We shall find reason to conclude that, so far from being central to the thought of the Gospel, it serves to obscure its main intention. All that is essential in the doctrine of the Spirit has already been expressed under other categories. If the passages in question were altogether omitted, the general thought would only gain in clearness and simplicity, although certain isolated ideas, which have proved infinitely fruitful, would disappear.

The New Testament doctrine of the Holy Spirit has its roots in the very beginnings of Hebrew thought. The broad lines of the development can

be traced with a fair degree of certainty, although our knowledge in regard to many points of detail is necessarily vague and conjectural. It will be well, before examining the doctrine in the special form which it assumes in the Fourth Gospel, to glance back on its previous history.

The Spirit of God, as it appears in the earliest records, is the cause of certain abnormal phenomena in human action and experience (*e.g.*, the strength of Samson, the daring of Gideon, the prophetic impulse and the subsequent madness of Saul). Primitive thought accepted the common order of things as natural and inevitable, and discerned the presence of a higher agency only in what seemed extraordinary. Strange occurrences in the physical world were due to divine intervention; departures from the normal action in human life were likewise the result of some supernatural influence. They were not to be assigned to the will of the man himself, but to the Spirit, the "breath" of God which had for the moment taken possession of him. Two things are noticeable in this earliest form of the conception. (*a*) There is no attempt to generalise the idea of the divine Spirit. Attention is directed to the particular phenomena which seem to break in upon the natural order, and the ascription of them to a common cause,—the "Spirit of God,"—is only another way of saying that they are inexplicable. (*b*) The ethical value of the phenomena is left out of account. We even read in the story of Saul of an "evil spirit from the Lord." The one mark

of spiritual activity is that it cannot be brought within the circle of natural causation, and therefore demonstrates itself to be from God.

In the development of prophecy a new direction was given to the primitive idea. The prophetic ecstasy, in which the visionary seemed for the time to be possessed with a power other than his own, was from the beginning the most signal instance of the divine action on human life. Originally, when the prophetic state was one merely of nervous excitation, the ideas of the Spirit which it suggested were crude and confused. The divine activity was associated not with the message of the prophet, but with his abnormal condition of mind and body while he uttered it. But after the advent of the great prophets a higher conception became possible. It was now recognised that the work of the prophet was to apprehend God in His ethical character, and in the light of this knowledge to declare His will. The Spirit was henceforth regarded as the medium of divine revelation. Its distinctive function was to convey some message from God to the mind of His prophets, while in a wider sense it was the power at work in the religious life generally. To receive of God's Spirit was to enter into communion with God,—to become capable of knowing, trusting, serving Him.

In certain later passages of the Old Testament an idea emerges which was destined to exercise a vital influence on Christian doctrine. Isaiah had already conceived of the Messianic King as endued in a supreme measure with the Spirit of God,—the

"Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Isa. xi. 2). It will "rest upon him" as an abiding possession, instead of visiting him as an intermittent impulse. The later pictures of the coming of the Messiah accentuate the idea thus suggested by Isaiah. Not only the Messiah Himself will possess the Spirit in its fullest measure, but the age which He inaugurates will be marked by "an outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh" (Joel ii. 28). The post-exilic time, conscious that the great prophetic impulse of an earlier day had spent itself, looked forward to its revival in a yet higher degree in the future. God seemed for the present to have withdrawn Himself, but the Messianic age would witness a new activity of His Spirit, in which all His people, and not merely the few chosen prophets, would have their part. This idea forms an almost constant element in the Messianic hope, as reflected for us in the Palestinian-Jewish writings.

One view of the Spirit, which meets us several times in the later and more reflective period of the Old Testament, fell practically out of sight in the subsequent development. According to this view, the Spirit possesses a cosmical significance. It represents the immanence of God in His world, as distinguished from the transcendence of His essential being. Thus in the first chapter of Genesis (which belongs to one of the later strata in the formation of the Pentateuch) the evolution of order out of chaos is effected by the Spirit of God. The same idea

reappears in several of the Psalms. God sends forth His Spirit and creates all life and renews the face of the earth (Ps. civ. 30). His Spirit is an all-pervasive presence from which it is impossible for man to flee (Ps. cxxxix. 7). The Book of Job, in like manner, speaks of the starry heavens as the work of the Spirit of God (Job xxvi. 13). In such passages we may trace the beginnings of the attempt to discover an intermediary power between God and creation, an attempt which became necessary in view of the absolute transcendence attributed to Him in later Jewish thought. The doctrine of the Spirit, however, was pursued no further in this direction. Subsequent speculation on the creative activity of God fell back almost exclusively on the Logos hypothesis, while the Spirit was associated with the idea of revelation, especially of that larger revelation which was to characterise the Messianic age.

Jesus Himself alludes to the Spirit in only a few isolated sayings of minor importance. With His profound sense of the immediacy of the relation between man and God, He seems instinctively to avoid a mode of speech that might imply an indirect action on the part of the Father. So far as He makes reference to the Spirit, He is evidently influenced by the ideas which connected it with the Messiah's kingdom. He claims that the prophecy in Isaiah (lxi. 1), "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," is now fulfilled in Himself. He promises His disciples the illumination of the Spirit in moments of crisis and perplexity (Matt. x. 20; Mk. xiii. 11;

Luke xii. 12). In the most striking passage of all He speaks of the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which can never be forgiven (Matt. xii. 31, 32). The saying is obscure, but has probably to be interpreted in accordance with the prevailing idea, that the power now manifest is no other than the power anticipated in the Messianic age. To mistake that power, to believe it satanic rather than divine, is the height of blindness and sin. In spite, however, of these few detached utterances, we may affirm that the idea of the Spirit is almost absent from the Synoptic teaching of Jesus. The later doctrine, as it appears in Paul and John, was developed out of the whole impression created by Jesus' Person and life, not out of His express words.

The immediate impulse to a Christian doctrine of the Spirit was supplied by the strange psychical phenomena which appeared in the primitive Church, and which were the outward expression of its intense religious life. In every Christian community there were those who felt themselves endowed with new capacities, — with those gifts of healing, faith, knowledge, prophecy, speaking with tongues, which Paul recounts in a well-known passage (1 Cor. xii., xiv.). Paul himself, with his nervous enthusiastic temperament, had his share in such abnormal experiences, and ascribed them, like his fellow-believers, to the working of the Spirit of God. The natural tendency to account for everything extraordinary by a theory of divine influence was now reinforced by the definite expectation of an out-

pouring of the Spirit in the Messianic age. For centuries it had been believed that the power which had manifested itself in the ancient prophets was to reappear, in larger measure and more widely diffused, after the Messiah's coming. The actual facts seemed to explain themselves in the light of this anticipation. Christ had inaugurated the new age, and the strange excitements which characterised the meetings of His followers were due to the activity of the promised Spirit. "These are not drunken, as ye suppose. . . . But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh" (Acts ii. 15–17).

Paul, however, while accepting the common belief that the new activities were the effect of a divine power, transformed it into a doctrine of permanent value and significance. (1) He gathered up once for all under a single conception the scattered phenomena which he observed in the life of the Church. They were the many-sided manifestations of one power—the Spirit—which, since the coming of Christ, had been dominant in the Christian community. Hitherto, as in early Israel, the Spirit had been regarded vaguely, as little more than a common name for a multitude of activities, all separate from each other. Paul discovered in them the working of a single power, "one and the self-same Spirit" which was the common possession of all believers. (2) He was thus able to think of it as permanently active. The old belief that it came intermittently in moments of peculiar experience was still tacitly

accepted, and seemed to be confirmed by the actual pneumatic phenomena. Paul, however, saw in these the refracted action of a single power which lay behind them, and might be presumed to be always present, even when it was not definitely traceable in some specific form. To the Messianic community the Spirit had become a lasting possession,—the very atmosphere in which it lived and breathed. (3) Hence under the action of the Spirit he included much more than the merely abnormal in religious experience. Not only gifts of healing and speaking with tongues, but the constant endowments of the Christian life—faith and love and hope and patience—originated in the influence of the Spirit. These, indeed, were its truest and most characteristic fruits. That new impulse towards a higher morality and a closer dependence on God, which was for ever present in the believer, was nothing else than the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. As the "flesh" is the principle of sinfulness to which man by his nature is subject, so over against it there is this other power which effects deliverance and makes possible the true life of righteousness.

In one peculiar passage (1 Cor. ii. 11) an analogy is drawn between the "spirit of man that is in him" and the "Spirit of God." The Apostle would here seem to attempt a semi-philosophical analysis of the power which he is elsewhere content to regard dynamically, in its practical effects. The Spirit which God communicates to men through Christ is at the same time the principle of His divine self-consciousness, and therefore carries with it a

revelation of the inmost nature of God. This line of thought, of cardinal importance for the later development of the doctrine, has little bearing, however, on the main thought of Paul. Much more significant are the passages in which the Spirit is brought directly into relation with Christ ("the Spirit of Christ"; "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus"; "the Lord is the Spirit"). The Spirit, whatever be its ultimate nature, is here identified with the power which manifested itself supremely in Christ, and has been mediated by Him to His people.

In so far, then, as Paul worked out his conception into a reasoned and consistent doctrine, his thought may be thus set forth. (1) The ultimate source of the Spirit is God. It resides in Him as the conscious mind resides in man, and proceeds from Him as His divine activity. (2) The sovereign manifestation of this Spirit of God was in Jesus Christ. It was like the power behind His life. It revealed itself in the whole work He accomplished for the world, and most signally in His Resurrection from the dead (Rom. i. 4, viii. 2). Because of this divine Spirit which was manifest in Him, Jesus is to be recognised as the Son of God. (3) Through Christ the Spirit becomes active in the life of His disciples. They become partakers in it through faith in Him, and are thus adopted into His own relation of Sonship to God. It takes possession of them as the power of a new life, and supports them in the struggle with the flesh and sin. It is like another and higher will sustaining theirs, and gradually subduing the whole nature to itself,—till

the natural life becomes "spiritual" life. (4) The Spirit, which is in itself an abiding, indwelling presence, is revealed in the multitude of separate activities which make up the Christian life,—in special gifts and powers, distributed according to the individual capacity, — in love, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, temperance. It takes the place of the old law imposed from without. Instead of statutory enactment, the Christian man is governed by a spontaneous, self-authenticating impulse towards the higher life. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Gal. v. 25).

Practically, therefore, the Spirit is to Paul the power of Jesus acting on believers in the after times as it acted on the first disciples. He is able to declare in so many words, "The Lord is the Spirit" (2 Cor. iii. 17). But it was not possible for Paul, as for the Fourth Evangelist, to assume a present and immediate fellowship between the exalted Christ and the believer. In accordance with his Apocalyptic idea of the Parousia, he conceived of the manifestation of Christ as still in the future. A time would come when His people would be received into His presence, but their communion as yet was not directly with Him, but with the Spirit which was in His stead. This idea of the Spirit as the "earnest" of what will be hereafter, is in some respects the key to the whole doctrine as it appears in Paul. He realised that the Christian life was in its essence a fellowship with Christ, and yet, by the belief which he shared with the primitive Church, he was obliged to think of this fellowship as still

future. The doctrine of the Spirit enabled him, nevertheless, to apprehend it as a present reality. Christ had departed, but the Spirit, given through Him and perpetuating His living influence, had taken His place and represented Him till He should come again. Possessing His Spirit in our hearts, we can reach forward to the future and live in the power of it. We can make Christ present to us, and hold a real communion with Him even now.

In passing from the Pauline to the Johannine doctrine, a preliminary question falls to be considered. Did John take up the conception directly from Paul, or was the Pauline influence modified, in this instance as in so many others, by the Alexandrian? A special force is given to this question by John's use of the term παράκλητος, a term which would appear to be borrowed immediately from the writings of Philo. Here, however, we have a striking example of the freedom with which the evangelist turned Philonic suggestions to the purposes of his own thought. The passage in Philo (*Vita Mos.* iii. 14) has reference to the intercession of the high priest, who is so clothed when he stands before God in the Temple that "the whole world may, symbolically, enter in with him." "For it was necessary that the man consecrated to the Father of the world should employ as advocate (παρακλήτῳ) His son, most perfect in virtue, to ensure forgiveness of sins and a supply of richest blessings." Attempts have indeed been made to explain "the son" in this

passage as the Logos, and so to establish a certain connection with the Johannine doctrine of the Spirit. But the thought of Philo, though somewhat difficult, appears to admit of only one interpretation. The high priest does not intercede with God in his solitary character as a man, but is supported by the prayer of the whole universe, —the perfect Creation or "Son" of God. The παράκλητος of the Gospel has nothing in common with that of Philo but the name, and the idea of aid or advocacy implied in it. Neither can the conception of πνεῦμα, as it is found in Philo, be regarded as in any sense parallel to the Johannine "Spirit." Philo transfers to the Logos those larger activities which are assigned to the Spirit in the later portions of the Old Testament. He associates πνεῦμα with the moods of ecstasy in the religious or philosophical life which are brought about at rare intervals by the inspiration of the Logos. The Alexandrian influence, therefore, has little to do with the genesis of John's doctrine of the Spirit. A peculiar character is no doubt imparted to this doctrine, as to every other, by the adoption of the Logos hypothesis; but apart from this it is derived directly from Christian, and chiefly from Pauline, sources.

We have now to examine the Johannine conception, as it is developed mainly, almost exclusively, in the Supper discourses. There is, however, an express statement which occurs earlier in the Gospel, and which prepares the way

for the more definite teaching. "This spake He of the Spirit which they that believed on Him should receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (vii. 39). The verse itself, which fits in awkwardly with the context, has been explained away as an interpolation, or as an unintelligent commentary on a genuine saying of Jesus; but the best proof of its authenticity is that it expresses clearly and succinctly a characteristic thought of the Gospel. The bestowal of the Spirit was conditional on Christ's departure. "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart I will send Him unto you" (xvi. 7). So in the original close of the Gospel (xx. 22) the moment is precisely marked when the promised gift of the Spirit was bestowed. Jesus, risen from the dead, appeared to His disciples, and breathing on them said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit." Doubtless in this postponement of the gift until after the death of Christ, John was influenced, in the first place, by the current tradition as embodied in the story of Pentecost; but the examination of his doctrine as a whole proves that he had accepted this tradition as an integral element in his own thought. The Spirit was to take the place of Christ, and therefore could not be while He was yet present. It proceeded from the glorified life into which He would not enter until after His death.

Was the Spirit, then, simply non-existent before the departure of Christ? There are state-

ments in the Gospel which would seem to indicate that from the beginning it had been active. The evangelist speaks of a light which in all ages has lighted every man. He acknowledges the divine authority of the Old Testament, due to its inspiration by the Spirit of God. He records the great saying of Jesus, that the hour "now is" when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The whole work of Jesus as conceived by John is bound up with the presupposition that a divine spirit, active from the beginning, was now finally revealed in Him. "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (iii. 34). "John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him" (i. 32) "The words that I speak unto you are spirit" (vi. 63), —channels, that is, of the spiritual energy that resided in Christ, and ever went forth from Him. So in the dialogue with the woman of Samaria, Jesus speaks of the living water that shall be in the believer like an ever-springing well, as a gift that He can impart even now. What the gift is He does not say, but in the passage quoted above (vii. 39) it is alluded to under the same image and referred to the Spirit, which could not yet be given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

We are compelled to the conclusion that the word "Spirit" is used by John in two senses,—a wider and a more specific sense. In the first instance it is the general term, consecrated by immemorial usage, for all divine action. Thus in

the great declaration, "God is Spirit," it is implied that the nature of God is spiritual, as distinguished from the earthly, material nature of man. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh"; and before man can become a child of God he must be born again into the higher world of "Spirit." In this wider acceptation of the term John is dealing essentially with the Old Testament conception of a supernatural energy, although it is involved in his mind with speculative ideas of Greek origin. "Spirit" is co-ordinated with "truth," and suggests the absolute and ideal being which is shadowed forth imperfectly in visible forms. Regarded in this more general sense, the Spirit has been always active. The work of Christ, even during His earthly life, was a manifestation of the Spirit, —an exhibition of divine as opposed to merely human power. But John recognises that after the death of Christ the action of the Spirit assumed a new and more definite character. He can affirm in so many words that the Spirit did not exist until the Lord was glorified. In place of those spiritual forces which had hitherto worked vaguely and incalculably, there was now one specific power—the Holy Spirit—which was the peculiar possession of the Church of Christ.

In thus regarding the Spirit which came after Christ's departure as something essentially new—different even from the Spirit as it acted through Christ's visible presence—John was governed, apparently, by two considerations. (1) He based on the actual fact that the Church was animated

by a power to which there was no parallel in former history. Even in the Lord's own lifetime the disciples had failed to attain to the faith and enthusiasm that possessed them in the succeeding age. A sudden access of power, however it might be explained, had undoubtedly come upon them after the Master's death. The explanation embodied in the story of the day of Pentecost had already established itself in Christian tradition, and John accepts it, although he dispenses with the literal story. He represents the risen Lord as breathing on His disciples and communicating to them the Holy Spirit. This new power was henceforth to reign in the Church, and to inspire it with a more than natural energy. (2) But the fact itself harmonised with one of the all-pervading ideas of the Gospel. We have seen that John explains the death of Christ as above all else the condition of His glory, His fuller activity. Divine as He was on earth, He was yet trammelled by the limitations of earthly existence, and could not exert His whole power till He had reassumed His state of glory. The pouring out of the Spirit on the Church is connected with this larger activity which Christ was now free to exercise. He could not impart His supreme gift until He had departed, until He had passed through death into His higher, unrestricted life.

The Spirit is given, then, after Christ's departure, and it is only given to those who belong to Christ by a conscious discipleship. "If ye love Me, ye will

keep My commandments; and I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you and shall be in you" (xiv. 15 f.). Here it is expressly declared that the sphere of the Spirit's action will be limited to the Christian community. Those only who love Christ and manifest their love by the life of moral obedience will have the capacity of receiving His gift. This limitation might seem at first sight to be out of keeping with the subsequent passage (xvi. 8-11), where an influence of the Spirit on "the world" is also contemplated. "When He is come He will convict the world in respect of sin and of righteousness and of judgment;—of sin because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye see Me no more; of judgment, because the Prince of the world is judged." The thought appears to be that through the Spirit sent by Him the claim of Christ will be triumphantly vindicated, so that the world will realise its sin in not believing on Him; will acknowledge His righteousness, established beyond all doubt by His return to the Father; will know itself judged when He manifestly overcomes the powers of sin and darkness. Thus interpreted, the passage ceases to stand in contradiction to the other sayings in which the Spirit is described as the peculiar possession of the community of believers. A wider action on the surrounding world is indeed claimed for it, but this action will be exerted indirectly, through its presence

in the community. Christ's people, in the power of His Spirit, will give effect to His message and vindicate its truth and value. The world which had rejected and condemned Him in His own lifetime will be compelled to reverse its judgment, when it witnesses the marvellous work of His Spirit within His Church. Paul, in his discussion of the comparative value of the different spiritual gifts, expresses in a simpler form the fundamental idea of the difficult Johannine passage. "But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth" (1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25). The evangelist gives a wider application to the idea of Paul. He imagines the Church as a whole confronting the incredulous world and impressing it with the sense of a divine power, which finds expression in the various Christian activities. In this manner the work of the Spirit will have a universal significance, although its proper and exclusive sphere is the Church.

The Spirit is conceived, then, as a gift bestowed by Christ after His departure on those who called themselves by His name. The nature of its work is broadly indicated by the Philonic term παράκλητος. Jesus, while He was yet with them, made up to His disciples, by His own over-shadowing presence, what was lacking in themselves; and after He was gone they required some power that might replace Him.

He would not leave them "orphaned"; He would send them a "Helper" or "Advocate," who would support their weakness as He had done during His sojourn on earth. John's conception, taken in its widest extent, is therefore substantially the same as Paul's. He regards the Spirit as the power of Christ still active in the Christian life and pervading it throughout. Love and faith and goodness, all the higher energies by which the Master's life reflects itself in the disciple, are the manifestations of the Spirit. But this conception is by no means worked out with the same fulness and many-sidedness as in Paul. It may, indeed, be assumed that John takes for granted many forms of the Spirit's activity which he does not expressly name;—this is evident not only from the comprehensive term παράκλητος, but from the passage (xvi. 8–11) which describes the reflex influence of the Spirit on the world. But his explicit words deal only with one phase of spiritual action. The Spirit will illuminate the minds of the disciples and guide them to all truth (xvi. 13). It will not only keep them in remembrance of what they have heard from Christ (xiv. 26), but will unfold His words in their deeper and larger import (xiii. 7, xvi. 14). Under the light of His Spirit the whole life of Christ will disclose its inner meaning, and sayings and events which were little thought of at the time will come out in their true grandeur. In every passage where the work of the Spirit is distinctly referred to, the thought of John takes this main direction. He conceives of the new power bestowed by Jesus on His disciples as above all a means of

illumination, of ever-deepening insight into the revelation of God in His Son.

Two reasons may be assigned for this more restricted view of the Spirit's activity which meets us in the Fourth Gospel. On the one hand the evangelist is influenced, more or less consciously, by the historical doctrine as represented in the Old Testament and the later Jewish theology. We have seen that ever since the rise of prophecy, the Spirit had been associated with one specific form of divine action. It was the medium through which God revealed Himself to His prophets, and the more general functions which it exercised in the religious life were so many different modes of this primary one. The idea still persisted in the early Church, that the work of the Spirit was essentially that of prophetic inspiration. Now that the Messianic age had set in, God had bestowed on all His people that higher enlightenment which had once been the special privilege of the chosen prophets. Out of this primitive doctrine Paul had evolved his splendid conception, but it had never been fairly understood or assimilated by the Church at large. The Fourth Evangelist, while he takes up the thought of Paul, develops it along the lines of the orthodox tradition, with the result that he deprives it, in great measure, of its real originality and greatness. What to Paul was a pervasive power, the source and inspiration of the whole Christian life, becomes the "Spirit of truth,"—the agent, above all, of religious knowledge.

But again, by his reversion to the earlier and

narrower conception, John was able to give effect to his characteristic view of knowledge as the chief religious activity. "That they should know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent," is the secret of eternal life. Jesus accordingly, when He Himself departed, bequeathed to His disciples the enlightening Spirit which should guide them to all truth. With the aid of the Spirit they would attain to an ever clearer apprehension of His nature and message. They would possess within themselves a safeguard against error and a fountain of new illumination. In the later theology, the Spirit was regarded almost solely as the supreme witness to the orthodox belief and the guide to its correct interpretation. John himself does not share in this restricted view, which is already traceable in the later writings of his school (cf. 1 John ii. 21, 27, iv. 1 ff., v. 6 ff.). The Spirit, as he conceives it, is a principle of inner development by which the traditional forms of belief may from time to time be broken up, in order to reveal more perfectly their essential content. But he is mainly answerable for the direction which was given to the doctrine by the more mechanical thinkers of the succeeding age. He had laid stress on knowledge as the chief condition of life, and had brought this knowledge into a peculiar relation with the work of the Spirit. The higher knowledge, guaranteed by the witness of the Holy Spirit, was identified later with the orthodox dogma of the Church.

Thus far we have considered the Johannine doctrine as it concerns the modes and conditions of

the Spirit's activity. A more difficult question confronts us when we seek to obtain some broad definition of what the Spirit is, in its essential nature. Is it a Personal Being, one with the Father and the Son, yet distinct from them, as in the later doctrine? Is it the Logos of the Prologue, under another name and another phase of manifestation? These views have both to be examined before we can attempt to discover the real direction of the evangelist's thought.

(1) It may be said at once that there is no trace in John of the doctrine of a Trinity. The Prologue, where the theological pre-suppositions of the Gospel are most succinctly stated, knows only of the eternal God and the eternal Word. The ensuing discourses of Jesus dwell upon the relation of the Father to the Son, without any thought of a third Person co-ordinated with them in one Godhead. In the later chapters, when the conception of the Spirit definitely emerges, the whole stress is laid on the activity of this divine power in the Christian community. The idea does not present itself to the evangelist, that it had a significance also to the eternal being of God. He implies rather that the Spirit as a distinct power was non-existent until after the departure of Christ from the world. In regard even to its action in the community, John is careful to withhold from it any independent being or influence. "He will take of the things that are Mine." "He will not speak of Himself, but what He shall hear that shall He speak." The whole function of the Spirit is to represent Christ and to

ensure that His influence shall continue in His Church.

None the less, the terms in which the Spirit is spoken of might seem to suggest a separate personality. The word παράκλητος is itself a personal name, and the pronoun "he" is consistently employed, even where the neuter would be naturally demanded by πνεῦμα. The attributes under which the Spirit's work is described—teaching, witnessing, convincing, guiding, hearing, judging, speaking—are all personal. An impression is everywhere conveyed of a power analogous to that of Christ Himself, taking His place and perpetuating His mission. Allowance must be made, however, for the very flexible use of the category of personality which is prevalent in ancient thought. Even the Old Testament, with its uncompromising monotheism, tends to hypostatise many abstract ideas, although it is far from implying that they are really to be considered as personal beings. In Philo, as in the Greek thinkers from whom he derives, this tendency is still more prominent. We cannot attach an undue importance to it when it re-appears in the Fourth Gospel, in which the abstract and the concrete, ideas and personal forces, are always merging in one another. Truth, light, life, the word of Christ, are described repeatedly in terms almost as personal as those which are applied to the Comforter. Granting, therefore, that much of his language may easily bear a personal interpretation, we are not to infer that John regarded the Spirit as a personality in the sense of the later Church doctrine. His conception,

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so far as he envisaged it to himself, is rather to be gathered from the verse (xx. 22): "He breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." The Spirit is an influence imparted through Christ to those who believe in Him,—His own divine breath moving for ever in His Church and quickening it with a new life.

There was, however, a special reason why John was led to describe the Spirit in terms which can be properly applied only to a person. To have described it otherwise would have obscured the very truth which, as we shall see, underlies His whole doctrine. The Spirit is in the last resort one with Christ Himself. It is spoken of as "another Comforter," taking the place of Christ and carrying on His work to a larger fulfilment. But this distinction is only an apparent one. The power which Christ sends to replace Him in the hearts of His disciples, is simply Himself returning as an unseen presence.

(2) The second question that requires an answer is that which concerns the relation of the Spirit that came after Christ's departure to the Logos of His pre-existent life. It might appear at first sight as if the two powers were identical. Before the Incarnation there was a divine presence immanent in the world, the life and light of all men,—and in Christ it was gathered up, so to speak, into a single manifestation. The death of Christ was His return to the glory which He had shared with God. He shook off His transient vesture of humanity and re-assumed His Logos attributes as the all-

pervading Spirit. This interpretation may indeed be said to correspond in some degree with the evangelist's thought. Since Christ is one with the Logos, the activity He exercises through His Spirit bears a certain analogy to that which as Logos He exercised from the beginning. But the Word made flesh was something more than the abstract Word. After the Prologue the category of the Logos falls into the background, as no longer sufficient by itself to explain the historical work of Jesus. He, in His human personality, was more than the divine principle which was all the time one with Him. The work of the Spirit does not connect itself with the pre-existent Logos of the Prologue, but with the earthly life as set forth in the Gospel proper. This, indeed, is the emphatic thought in the mind of John. He seeks to ensure that the power which will replace Jesus will represent His personal activity as it had been during His life on earth. The Spirit will unfold more fully the words which Jesus had spoken, will keep His disciples in remembrance of all that He was and did. It will give permanence to the historical revelation, which might otherwise be merged in the eternal action of the Logos and lose its distinct reality.

The difference between the Logos and the Spirit is clearly indicated by the different spheres of action which are ascribed to them. The Logos is the "light that lighteth every man." Not only so, but it possesses a cosmical significance as the power through which God has created and sustains the world. John does not indeed develop this

side of the conception, but he makes it evident that his Logos, like that of Philo, is universally present and active as the medium of God's self-revelation. The Spirit, on the other hand, manifests itself solely within the Church of Christ. Its influence on the world, if any such influence can be assigned to it, is altogether of an indirect character, and is determined by its action on the Church. There can be no question of any cosmical function exercised by the Spirit. Its work is effected in the heart of the believer, and is strictly one of religious guidance and enlightenment. John himself appears to be quite unconscious of a possible identification of the Spirit with the Logos of the Prologue. He introduces it as an entirely new principle, which could have no real existence until Christ was glorified. His thought of it has nothing to do with his philosophical speculation, but is bound up entirely with his knowledge of the actual work of Christ.

In order to discover, then, how John conceives of the Spirit, we have to consider more closely in what relation it stands to the life of Jesus. It is abundantly clear that the relation is a very close and vital one. The office of the Spirit is to "bring to remembrance" all that Jesus has said and done (xiv. 26), to justify His life against the slander and unbelief of the world (xvi. 8–11), to lead His disciples to a deeper knowledge of His mind and will, which they had only understood in part while He was with them (xvi. 12–15). Against these passages which relate the Spirit immediately to Jesus, we can indeed set others, which might seem

at first sight to bring it into direct dependence on God. "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Comforter" (xiv. 16). "The Comforter whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father" (xv. 26). Here it might appear as if the evangelist sought to represent the Spirit as the immediate gift of God, who confirms and perfects the work of His Son by this other power sent forth from Himself. But even in these passages the relation to Christ is made explicit. It is in consequence of His prayer that the Spirit is given: the Father will send it in His name (xiv. 26); it proceeds from the Father, and is yet sent from Him by Christ Himself. There can be little doubt that the thought is similar to that which comes to expression in other sayings, where the power of God is discovered behind the immediate work of Jesus. "No man can come to Me except the Father draw Him." "The Father Himself hath borne witness of Me." "I do nothing of Myself, but My Father worketh in Me." As the work of Christ in His lifetime had been in its essence a manifestation of the power of God, so the Spirit which came after His departure had proceeded from God. None the less, in a more immediate sense, it was He Himself who sent it. He continued to work through this divine power, and it bore witness of Him.

The Spirit is thus sent by Jesus after His death to replace His own presence with His disciples. At this point, however, the crucial difficulty in the

Johannine conception is at once apparent. We have seen that John regards the departure as only "for a little while,"—for the brief interval between the death and the Resurrection. The Lord had withdrawn His visible presence in order to return, and unite Himself in a closer, more lasting fellowship with those that loved Him. There is therefore no occasion for the sending of "another Comforter" who will replace Him. Christ Himself, abiding with His disciples, will be more to them than the promised Spirit, which is, at the most, nothing but His substitute. The evangelist appears to be fully aware of the difficulty in which his double conception has involved him. He feels that it is impossible to discriminate between the work of the Spirit and the work of the exalted Christ, and allows the two ideas to shade into each other at every turn. Jesus makes His promise of the "other Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, which will abide with you for ever" (xiv. 16), and declares in the same breath, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you" (xiv. 18). The ideas of the coming of the Spirit and of His own return are interchangeable, and no attempt is made to keep them separate.

Indeed, the more closely we examine the Johannine doctrine of the Spirit, the more we are compelled to acknowledge that there is no real place for it in the theology as a whole. All that is vital in it is contained already in the grand conception of the return of Christ as an invisible and abiding presence. We can come to no other conclusion than that John endeavoured to combine with his

own thought, which was complete in itself, the doctrine of the Spirit, as set forth by Paul. To Paul the union with Christ was still something in the distance, which faith could anticipate, so confidently as to regard it almost as a present reality, but which could not yet have its true consummation. The Spirit reigned in the interval, until Christ Himself should be manifest. It was the "earnest" of that closer fellowship which was as yet withheld. In Paulinism, therefore, the idea of the Spirit had a real and essential place. It enabled the Apostle to maintain his hope of the Parousia, and at the same time to live his present life in the power of Christ. John, however, has escaped from the crude apocalyptic theory which still obscured the deeper instincts of Paul. He has grasped the underlying truth in the idea of the Parousia while discarding the inadequate form, and is able to conceive of Christ as already come and inwardly present to His people. This conception of the return of Christ is his own characteristic expression of the Pauline doctrine, and in seeking to combine it with the literal doctrine of Paul he only complicates and weakens it.

The doctrine of the Spirit may therefore be regarded as the supreme instance of that tendency, everywhere prevalent in the Gospel, to conserve the traditional belief alongside of the new and deeper interpretation. From the beginning the Church, as representing the Messianic community, had claimed to possess the Spirit, which, according to prophecy, was to be poured out on God's people in

the latter days. This Spirit, at first regarded as a power that worked intermittently in abnormal experiences, became with Paul the motive energy of the whole Christian life. He expressed his knowledge of Christ, his living fellowship with Him, in terms of the activity of the Spirit, which represented Christ until He came again in the Parousia. John had transcended the primitive system of thought of which the idea of the Spirit formed an integral part; but he had still to reckon with it as a belief which had entered profoundly into the accepted teaching of Christianity. He was conscious, also, that it did not conflict with his own belief, but rather anticipated it in a less developed and explicit form. He is content, therefore, to introduce it as an alternative to his own conception of the return of Christ. The Spirit which he apparently describes as a separate power, is yet dependent on Christ, and perpetuates His work, and imparts nothing which it has not received from Him. In a word, the Spirit is one with Christ Himself. That power which the disciples are conscious of as an inward spiritual presence is their risen Lord, come again that He may abide with them for ever.

At the same time a certain distinction is drawn between the whole activity of the exalted Christ, and the special work which He will accomplish as the Spirit. It has been noted already that the peculiar task ascribed to the παράκλητος is that of illumination. He is the Spirit of truth, in its

Johannine sense of absolute reality. He leads the mind beyond symbols and appearances to the knowledge of what is ultimate and essential. Possessing this Spirit, the disciples will be dependent no longer on external revelation, but will have a light within them, leading them on to an ever fuller and clearer knowledge. Jesus Himself, in His Synoptic teaching, replaces the ancient system of statutory commandment by the "law of liberty," the principle of moral autonomy; and John by his doctrine of the Spirit extends this principle to the intellectual life. As the Christian conscience was free henceforth to legislate for itself, so the mind, enlightened by Christ, was to possess its own inward source of revelation. It was to discover those "many things" which were left unsaid by Jesus, or only shadowed forth by Him in dark hint or parable. It was to advance continually on the traditions of the past, and renew its thought of God in the light of new knowledge and new necessities. The Gospel itself, in its daring re-interpretation of the words and the life of Jesus, is the best commentary on this profound and fruitful idea. The evangelist goes back on the historical record and reads into it those larger meanings which a century of Christian life and reflection had gradually unfolded. He contemplates the work of Jesus not merely as it once was in the days of the visible sojourn, but as it was still continued in the experience of the Church and of the individual believer. Thus in an age when Christianity was in danger of hardening into a lifeless tradition, John asserted the

supreme authority of the Spirit. He recorded the Lord's message as it was revealed to him by the Spirit, by the living Christ who was still present to those who loved Him.

Here, however, we must take account of that other thought on which John is careful to lay a peculiar emphasis. The office of the Spirit consists in declaring the mind of Jesus and perpetuating the work He had accomplished in His earthly life. "He shall testify of Me," "He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak." "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of mine and show it unto you." The Spirit is the perennial source of new revelation, and yet this new revelation is only the unfolding, ever more largely and clearly, of what has already been imparted in the life of Jesus. All our knowledge of God and His truth is ultimately derived from the historical manifestation, which conveys a different message to each succeeding time, but can never be superseded. We have seen that in his doctrine of the Return of Christ the evangelist asserts the identity of the glorified Saviour with the Jesus who had sojourned on earth. The work that had been resumed under larger conditions, with an access of divine power, was only the continuation of the earthly work, in the light of which it must be interpreted. This same idea re-appears and receives a more definite application in the doctrine of the Spirit. The exalted Christ, who abides with His people as the Spirit of truth, is one with Jesus, and delivers a message in which the first message is perpetuated,—in which it

is expressed more fully, and adapted to the world's ever-changing needs.

On the one side, therefore, John vindicates the right of the Christian intelligence to reach out beyond the literal tradition to a higher and completer knowledge. In His brief earthly ministry Jesus did not exhaust His revelation. He departed from us in order to return, and to impart to the successive generations of His people those further truths which the disciples in His lifetime had been unable to bear. "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it" (xvii. 26). But while claiming this freedom for the Christian thinker, and exemplifying it in his own Gospel, John insists on the eternal worth and significance of the historical record. The Spirit is not to be confounded with the speculative fancy, wandering at its own pleasure and arriving from time to time at new beliefs. It is the Spirit of Jesus,—His mind as revealed in His ministry on earth, living again in His disciples. It will only interpret to them, under new forms and in larger measure, the truth which He delivered in His recorded words. "Whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: . . . for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you."

CHAPTER XII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

AN attempt has been made in the foregoing chapters to analyse the Johannine teaching into its chief elements, and to examine them in detail. It only remains to gather up the results of the discussion, in order to arrive at some estimate of the meaning and value of the Gospel as a whole.

By our ignorance of the authorship of the work and of the immediate occasion which called it forth, we are deprived of an all-important clue to its main intention. We are able, nevertheless, to form at least an approximate judgment. The Christian religion, transplanted to a Gentile soil, removed by a whole generation from the age of the apostles, had entered on a new and critical phase of its history. To maintain itself under the altered conditions, it required to reinterpret its message, in such a manner as to impress the larger world of Hellenic culture, while still preserving its own essential character. The need for such a re-interpretation was made evident to the Church at large by the exigencies of controversy. In the interval

that had elapsed since the death of Paul and the first apostles, the attack on Christianity had assumed new and more serious forms. The Jewish opposition had become more radical; objections, to which the primitive theology supplied no answer, were raised by the philosophical schools; fresh enemies were always declaring themselves as the Church extended its borders. It is highly probable that the Fourth Gospel, like the Apologies of the succeeding age, was originally designed to serve a controversial interest, and that the larger plan gradually developed itself in the writer's mind out of this narrower one. He perceived that the conditions of the Christian mission had entirely changed within the past generation. Before an adequate answer could be rendered to particular difficulties, it was necessary to present the whole system of Christian belief under a fresh light, in language that would be intelligible to the new time.

In the case of all the Apologists of the second and third centuries, the task of defence entails a certain modification of the traditional teaching. The Church, in its effort to overcome the opposition of the Hellenic world, is compelled to reconcile itself as far as possible with Hellenic ideas. John employs this method more fully and more deliberately than any of his immediate successors. He is not content to effect a partial compromise with the prevailing modes of thought, but attempts a complete restatement of Christian doctrine. The polemical design with which he started becomes a subordinate, though still traceable element, in the

greater design of interpreting the message of Christ to the mind of his own age.

His purpose, however, requires to be more exactly understood. Recognising, much more clearly than other Christian thinkers, the need for a thoroughgoing reconstruction of the Church's belief, he was anxious to conserve whatever was distinctive and essential in it. This is apparent in his treatment of the various doctrines which are considered more or less fully in the course of his Gospel. While recasting them freely, in the characteristic moulds of his thought, he is careful in every instance to keep himself in line with the orthodox tradition. But his fidelity to the genuine Christian message is most of all discernible in his attitude to the central doctrine of the Person of Christ. The ultimate power which had inspired the mighty movement of the Apostolic age was nothing else than the life and character of Jesus. Not His actual teaching but His wonderful Personality, as it had impressed itself on His disciples in their immediate intercourse with Him, had constituted His revelation. John, though he writes a century afterwards, when the life of Jesus was fading into the distance, perceives that Christianity is inseparably bound up with it. He goes back to the facts of the gospel history, and seeks to present them to his contemporaries as the eternal basis of their faith. The reconstruction of doctrine is everywhere subsidiary to this practical purpose of affirming once for all the supreme value of the historical revelation in Jesus.

The evangelist aims, then, at interpreting Christianity to the new age in such a manner as to conserve, and even to assert more clearly than hitherto, its distinctive message; and within this larger intention we can discern a more definite one. The acute opposition between the Christian community and the outside world had resulted in the fuller development of the idea of the Church. It had come to be realised that the followers of Christ were a people apart, and that the preservation of the new religion depended on the unity of the Church within itself. It was sought to maintain this unity, outwardly by a strict organisation, inwardly by the establishment of one common type of belief in which all private opinion should be merged. The church history of the early centuries is largely a record of the various struggles that inevitably followed from the attempt to fulfil this ideal; and at the time when our Gospel was written the first great struggle, occasioned by the appearance of Gnosticism, was just beginning. John speaks in the name of the orthodox Church, and his work is permeated with a strong church consciousness; but his position is somewhat peculiar. While insisting on the imperative need for unity, he feels that it is only attainable by a wider comprehension. The antagonisms which had revealed themselves within the Church were not yet so serious that they might not be reconciled, to the deepening and enrichment of the common faith. Outward uniformity would be worse than useless if no room were allowed within the mechanical frame-

work for the free activity of the Spirit of Christ.

Much that at first sight appears contradictory in the Gospel receives its natural explanation when we regard the evangelist as maintaining the church idea, and yet endeavouring to broaden and spiritualise it. We can understand why he recognises the external order of government and worship, and insists at the same time on the inward and personal character of Christian discipleship. We can understand also his curious twofold attitude towards the accepted system of belief. On the one hand, he identifies himself with the church doctrine, and finds a place even for those elements in it which are logically inconsistent with his own thought. As a member of the Church, he yields his assent to the orthodox faith, and takes for granted that in his new presentation he is only unfolding and interpreting it. On the other hand, he does not exclude ideas which were already regarded by a large section of the Church as heretical. He perceives that the new movement, which was afterwards to result in the various Gnostic systems, had its ground in a genuine religious need, and endeavours to arrive at some understanding with it. The heresy would be most effectually overcome if the truth in it could be sifted out from the falsehood, and allowed its due place in the established faith. Hence the peculiar relation, at once polemical and sympathetic, in which John appears to stand towards Gnosticism. He sees that it is fraught with danger, and reaffirms, with a special emphasis, those vital facts of Christianity

which it threatened to set aside; but he is willing to borrow from it whatever seemed true and valuable in its teaching. The Church, as he conceived it, was to allow room within its pale for all the different types of Christian thought and temperament. It might so assimilate fresh elements into its doctrine as to satisfy every legitimate spiritual need.

The Gospel, then, is the expression of the mind of the Church in its effort to readjust itself to a new age and a new environment. It is also the expression (and if this is forgotten, we miss its ultimate secret) of a profound personal religion. John had held fellowship for himself with the invisible but still living Christ, and claims that the knowledge to which he has thus attained is equally valid with that of the immediate disciples. He is conscious, indeed, that he can penetrate even more truly than they into the real mind of Christ. The outward revelation has become an inward one. The Master whose intercourse with His people was once limited by earthly conditions has now returned to dwell in their very hearts. This intense conviction, ever present in the mind of John, that he also had known the Lord as truly and immediately as the first apostles, was the ultimate motive which impelled him to write his Gospel. He believed that the eternal Christ of inward religious experience was one with the Jesus of history. The life as it had been manifested on earth was only the beginning of the larger invisible life, and the two revelations served

to complete and to illuminate one another. In the light, therefore, of his own personal knowledge, he goes back upon the historical record, and seeks to understand it in its deeper and more permanent meaning. He feels himself at liberty to break through the letter of the tradition, to supply new sayings and symbolic incidents, to reflect on Jesus in His lifetime the glory with which the faith of the Church had encircled Him. To ascribe all this to some process of conscious invention, is to mistake the whole purpose and character of the Gospel. The departure from the traditional record had its true motive in a profound realisation of the Lord's continual presence. The knowledge of Christ which had come to him in inward communion was merged in John's mind with the knowledge he had received from without. It was equally valid and authentic. The same Christ who had spoken in the bygone times was speaking now, and the words were as truly His as those which had actually fallen from His lips. This, indeed, is the abiding value of the Gospel, that it brings Jesus before us at once as a historical Person and as the invisible Lord who is ever present with His people. The experience of faith is thus invested with a new reality. We are able to feel that the inward presence to which we still have access is no other than Jesus Christ; and the message He speaks to us in our own lives blends itself with His recorded message, and is no less personal and authoritative. It is John more than any other teacher who has imparted the secret of that living fellowship with Christ which is the

central meaning of Christianity. He wrote of Jesus as he himself had known Him, and claimed for all believers the same right of immediate personal knowledge. They also, although they had not seen, might hold communion with Christ, and as His disciples have life through His name.

The cardinal ideas of the Gospel have been examined at length in the foregoing chapters. They may be resolved, on an ultimate analysis, into three. (1) Jesus Christ in His actual Person is the revelation of God. The natural tendency, in an age removed by two generations from the life of Jesus, was to lose sight of the Person and to conceive of Christianity as a system of doctrine. Jesus was the revealer of certain eternal truths, and when these were understood His life might be left aside as something temporary and accidental. The evangelist perceived, however, that the grand fact of the Christian religion was Christ Himself. He found the revelation not so much in any words that Jesus had spoken, as in the Personality that was reflected, at best imperfectly, in the words. The teaching of Jesus as presented in the Fourth Gospel has little of positive content. It consists almost entirely of sayings about Himself and His relation to God and the belief and obedience due to Him. This was not the nature of our Lord's teaching as we know it from the Synoptic Gospels; but John breaks away from the tradition in order to bring out emphatically what he sees to be the meaning at the heart of it. Jesus was Himself the revelation; and

His words, however great and wonderful, were chiefly precious because it was He that spoke them, and they afforded insight into His mind and spirit. In virtue of what He Himself was, He had opened up a new world to His disciples and brought them into communion with God.

(2) The peculiar work of Jesus was to impart Life. There was resident in Him an altogether new principle, by which He lived and which He sought to communicate to those who believed in Him. In previous Christian speculation, the life which Jesus had promised as the reward of faithful discipleship was regarded as something in the future; John conceives of it as a present possession. The believer, in the same act by which he surrenders himself to Christ, is born into a new state of existence, and becomes endowed with new powers and new capacities as a child of God. The life after death is only the continuation, under conditions of wider freedom, of the life which may be apprehended here and now. We recognise here again that John has penetrated to the essential meaning of the Synoptic teaching of Jesus, and has given it a clearer and in some respects more adequate expression. He realises that the life described by Jesus under apocalyptic imagery was in its substance an inward and spiritual blessing, and was involved in that "change of mind" without which a man cannot enter the Kingdom.

(3) The life is communicated through union with Christ. It was inherent in His own Person, and before it can reappear in His disciples they

must become in some sense identified with Himself. Belief and moral obedience are only stages towards a vital fellowship with Him, through which His very nature will be imparted. Life, as it manifests itself in the Christian community of all times and places, is simply the life that was in Christ, continually reproduced in His followers, who have known Him as an abiding presence and apprehended Him in a mystical union. In this profound conception of the relation of the believer to Christ, the evangelist develops, along lines already indicated by Paul, a truth which is everywhere implicit in the authentic gospel history. Jesus chose His disciples "that they should be with Him" (Mk. iii. 14), that His immediate influence should be around them continually, and transform them into His own likeness. This personal fellowship with Jesus was the secret of the new life which gradually sprang up within them. Reflecting on their experience, John is conscious that it must still repeat itself if Christ's disciples in the after times are truly to participate in His gift. They also must have access to the immediate presence of Christ, and become, in some sense, one with Him.

These three ideas, however, are all presented under two different aspects, in accordance with the twofold view of the Christian revelation which pervades the whole thought of John. He writes, on the one hand, out of a deep religious experience. Through fellowship with Christ he had attained to a higher life and a new assurance of God; and

he accepts Him, by a simple judgment of faith, as his Lord and Saviour. But he feels it necessary to explain and justify the convictions that have thus been born in him. He has recourse to the speculative forms which the thought of his time afforded him, and seeks to express by means of them the purely religious truths of Christianity. The result is that the genuine import of his teaching is to a great extent obscured. We have constantly to disengage it from the alien metaphysic which appears to interpret, but most often warps and conceals it.

Looking back, then, on the three main ideas indicated above, we can discover in the case of each of them the forced combination of two different modes of thinking. (1) Jesus in His own Person is the revelation of God. This is the fundamental thesis of the Gospel, and it embodies, in the last resort, a simple religious judgment. The evangelist had come under the power of Jesus, had beheld His glory as it was reflected in the love and holiness and self-sacrifice of His earthly life. He realised, as the first disciples had done, that God Himself was manifest in that life of Christ. But he translates this belief, given immediately in a religious experience, into the terms of a philosophical theory. Jesus revealed the Father because He was Himself identical with the Logos, the eternal principle which, according to current speculation, was the medium of God's activity. His life, therefore, was that of a divine being, self-determined, omniscient, endowed with supernatural energies. He revealed God not so much in His moral

attributes as in His intrinsic nature. The picture of Jesus which passes before us in the Gospel is everywhere imbued with this conception of Him as Logos, and loses, in this way, much of its reality and attractive power. But the eternal Word is at the same time the historical Jesus. Behind the theological construction there is the reminiscence of the life as it was actually lived, in its moral grandeur and divineness. Sometimes, as in the Supper discourses, this reminiscence definitely breaks through the Logos conception; but even where it is most obscured its influence is still present and determinative. The conviction that God was manifest in Christ has first impressed itself on John's mind through his contemplation of the life, and his statement of it in terms of the Logos doctrine is in the nature of an afterthought. The doctrine, born of a philosophical need, was radically incapable of expressing the religious truth; and throughout his Gospel John is vainly striving to reconcile two different conceptions of Jesus. They remain, in the end, apart—always parallel but never, in any true sense, assimilated to each other.

(2) In his presentation of the idea of Life, we can discern the same twofold strain in the evangelist's thinking. Christ is the Life-giver in virtue, first, of his Logos nature. He was Himself of the essence of God, and the life that dwelt in Him was different in quality from that of men. The purpose of His coming was to transfuse into man's earthly being the higher life which belongs originally

to the divine nature alone. But again, John starts from the idea of life as it had come to him through the Old Testament and the Synoptic teaching of Jesus. According to this conception, life is the realisation of man's true activity as a moral and religious being. God, in His infinite love and holiness, is the Living One, and man participates in the divine life by conforming his will to the will of God, and so entering into communion with Him. Life as thus conceived has gained a new meaning and reality for John through his knowledge of the revelation in Christ. He sees that the true life has been manifested once for all in the life of Jesus, and that men can obtain it only by sharing in His Spirit and abiding in Him continually. Jesus in His own Person was the source of life to all future ages of His Church. Here again the metaphysical and the underlying religious ideas remain separate, although they are covered by one name and are apparently fused together. In His effort to explain the profound change effected in a man's moral nature by the power of Christ, the evangelist has recourse to modes of thought which belong to an alien philosophy. The life which consists in love and faith and likeness to Jesus is described as a higher kind of essence, inherent in the divine Logos and by Him imparted to men.

(3) The two lines of thought are perhaps most clearly traceable in the central doctrine of the communication of life through union with Christ. On one side John conceives of the union as effected mystically, it may almost be said magic-

ally. To obtain the higher essence which constitutes life, the believer must be united to the Life-giver in a semi-physical relation. A real validity is attributed to the Sacraments, especially to the Eucharist, in which Christ gives perpetually of His flesh and blood, and thereby incorporates Himself with His people. The words of Christ, likewise, are something more than the vehicle of His message. They carry with them some portion of His own personal being, and become a life-giving energy in the hearts of all who receive them. And this partial appropriation of the divine nature through word and sacrament only prepares the way for a complete and abiding union, in which Christ as an indwelling presence gives Himself wholly to His disciples. The believer is like a branch grafted on the vine, and the life that possesses him is the life of God, mediated through His Son. This mystical conception, however, is combined throughout with the purely religious one. The union with Christ in which life is imparted is a moral and spiritual relation, a "friendship" between the Lord and those who believe in Him. They are united to Him not only by an outward obedience but by an inward sympathy, and have identified their whole will with His. They live in His presence, so that His influence is upon them always, inspiring and transforming them. It was by intercourse with Jesus in His living Person that the immediate disciples were brought near to God and attained to new power and clearer knowledge. John perceives, and this is the ultimate teaching of his

Gospel, that the life is still communicated by this personal fellowship. Jesus is ever present with His people, even nearer to them than He was in the first days, and they can hold communion with Him, and with God through Him.

Thus in every part of the Gospel we can discover two lines of thinking, apparently brought together but in reality parallel and distinct. The evangelist is seeking to express ideas essentially religious under metaphysical categories which were in their nature inadequate to his purpose. The Logos doctrine and the historical revelation in Jesus Christ could not be brought into real harmony. A seeming reconciliation could only be effected by a certain confusion of terms and a continual transition from one order of ideas to another fundamentally different. We cannot admit that the Alexandrian philosophy allowed of a final, or even of an approximate, expression of the truth of Christianity. It was a form borrowed from the time, and the vital teaching of the Gospel can be disengaged from it, and requires to be so, before we can grasp its real significance. Nevertheless the adoption by John of the Logos hypothesis marks an all-important stage in religious history. The need that it served was in many respects a temporary one, but even thus it prepared the way for a permanent broadening and deepening of Christian thought.

(1) Much was gained, in the first place, by the

alliance with Hellenic culture which was now rendered possible. It was the acceptance of the doctrine of the Logos that acclimatised the new religion in that Gentile world to which, since the days of Paul, it had made its chief appeal. Involved hitherto in Jewish tradition and symbol, it had remained foreign in large measure to the Greek mind, but it could now translate itself into intelligible modes of thought, and influence a far wider circle. Not only so, but new and fruitful lines of theological development were now laid open. Christianity could serve itself heir to the results of five centuries of Hellenic thinking, and was thus enabled to find a larger, and in some ways a truer, expression for its own intrinsic message.

(2) The universal character of the work of Christ was plainly asserted for the first time by the identification of Him with the Logos. Paul, indeed, had apprehended, with a sure religious instinct, that there was neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free, but all were one in Christ Jesus. As a Jewish thinker, however, he could discover no adequate form wherein to express this conviction of the universality of the gospel. He still moved within the circle of the traditional Messianic ideas, wrapt up as they were with the expectation of a purely national deliverer. With the adoption of the Logos doctrine, Christianity was finally severed from the bonds of Jewish particularism. Jesus was now the Word that had been from the beginning, the Light that lighteth

every man. The name of Messiah ceased to bear its historical meaning, and became nothing but an alternative for the truer and more comprehensive title of "Son of God."

(3) Christianity could now be conceived not only as the universal but as the absolute religion. Since Jesus was the eternal Logos, the same in essence with God, He could no longer be regarded as merely one in the succession of God's messengers. He was the "true Light," the absolute revelation. His message might be capable of ever new and larger interpretation, but it would always be the same message, revealed through Him once for all. It is apparent from the prologue that John consciously realised this implication of the Logos idea. Jesus is contrasted with the "men sent from God" who went before Him,—with John the Baptist and Moses, the supreme types of the prophetic order. They were only reflections of the light which in Him was directly manifest. The same thought is emphasised, on its other side, in the sayings concerning the Spirit in the Supper discourses. All revelation henceforth will be mediated by the Spirit, which will only unfold in new language and with a fuller power the truth imparted by Christ. "He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you."

(4) With the aid of his Logos hypothesis, John was able to assign to Jesus His central place as not only the founder, but in His own Person the object, of Christianity. To know Him, and believe in Him, and apprehend Him through an inward

fellowship, constituted the real aim and meaning of the Christian life. In this desire to assert the divine worth of the Person of Jesus, we can discern the root motive of John's acceptance of the doctrine of the Logos. He was conscious, by a judgment of faith, that Jesus was in Himself the way and the truth and the life, through whom alone men have access to the Father. It was necessary to employ some definite theological symbol which might affirm for all time coming this supreme religious significance of Jesus Christ. The Logos doctrine, offered him by the current philosophy, was indeed an imperfect symbol. It clothed the figure of Jesus in a merely formal divinity, and half obscured those elements in His life and Personality which were most truly divine. But it was the shell which preserved within it the vital truth of Christianity,—that Jesus is Himself the revelation. His religion, ever since this Gospel was written, has centred on His own Person, and has thus maintained itself, amidst all changes, as a real and living power.

In all these directions the idea of the Logos, adopted by John as the philosophical basis of his teaching, has served a great and necessary purpose; but it was provisional and inadequate, and the gains that resulted from it were not secured without a sacrifice. The evangelist desired to enhance the glory of Jesus by robing Him in the attributes of the eternal Word. By the heightening of the miracles, by the suppression of all that might seem derogatory to the divine

nature, by the substitution of lofty oracular language for the simple sayings and parables, he sought to represent our Lord more worthily as the Son of God, manifest in the flesh. We cannot but feel, however, that he largely defeats his own purpose. The plain Synoptic narrative, in which Jesus passes before us as He actually lived, leaves on our minds a far truer and grander impression of His divine character than the elaborate theological Gospel. Those sayings about the Father and the Kingdom of God and the new life which have come down to us as Jesus spoke them, are richer and deeper, for all their apparent simplicity, than the grandest sayings in John. The passages of the Fourth Gospel which have arrested the Christian imagination are just those which conform most closely to the Synoptic picture, and are borrowed possibly from the same original tradition: the meeting with the Samaritan woman, Jesus weeping for a lost friend, the washing of the disciples' feet, the Master's last farewells to "His own." Here the attempt to clothe Jesus with a metaphysical divinity is laid aside, and He stands out in the authentic glory of His love and goodness and compassion. Presented thus, He "draws men unto Him," and reveals His likeness to God in a far truer and deeper sense than when He wears the attributes of the eternal Word.

The permanent value of the Gospel does not depend, therefore, on its adaptation of the Logos doctrine to the facts of Christianity, but is to be

sought apart from that doctrine, one may almost say in spite of it. The evangelist has grasped intuitively in the experience of faith, certain truths which he endeavours to interpret by means of the accepted philosophy of his age. That philosophy has now in great part lost its meaning to us. At the best it was an imperfect medium, intractable to the purpose for which John employs it. But the form is one thing and the substance another. The Gospel, on a last analysis, is the personal testimony of a profound religious spirit, expressing, in the language of a given time, the truths which must ever be vital to Christian faith.

(1) It was John who first comprehended, and asserted for all time, the abiding significance of the earthly life of Jesus. After the lapse of two generations, when the life was now fading into a distant memory, he went back upon it, and discovered in it the absolute revelation of God. His work took the form, not of a theological treatise, but of a Gospel—an actual narrative of the life of Christ. To know Him as He had lived and worked among men, was the one key to the meaning of His religion. It is true that John's record, as compared to that of the Synoptists, is vague and fragmentary. Much of the impression that it creates on us is due to the reminiscence of the Synoptic narratives with which we approach it and which we read into it unconsciously at every step. But it is no less true that the Synoptics themselves acquire a new value from the "spiritual Gospel" which follows and completes them. It supplies us with the larger conception of

Jesus as the ever-present Lord, and we carry this conception with us, as John himself did, when we contemplate the earthly life. Sayings and incidents that might seem in themselves to signify little, appeal to us with a new meaning. The story that has come down to us out of a remote past connects itself with our own experience and touches us directly with a living power. It is the Fourth Evangelist who has taught us to read this eternal import in the recorded life of Christ. He has lifted it, so to speak, out of the limits of its historical conditions, and made it a present reality to believers in all ages.

(2) We owe to this Gospel our deepest and most sufficing conception of the true nature of the work of Christ. In the doctrine of Life, as John presents it, there is much that belongs to a mode of thinking with which the world has long ceased to be in sympathy. The metaphysical categories which he employed could afford no true explanation of the great inward change effected by Christ in those who confess Him. But we must distinguish between the essence of John's thought and the forms in which he embodied it. He perceived, as not even Paul had done hitherto, how profound and radical is the "change of mind" involved in Christian discipleship. It is like a new birth, a transition from death to life. However we may judge of John's own peculiar doctrine of the new life, we cannot but recognise that he has supplied us with the one conception of the work of Christ which can never lose its value and fruitfulness. The eternal need of man is for life,

more abundant life. The word may carry with it widely different meanings to different men, in various periods of the world's history, but in itself it is the one comprehensive word which sums up all the thousand wants and longings of our human nature. And in Jesus Christ, as this evangelist has taught us, we have Life—the supreme possession in which all desire is satisfied.

(3) The Gospel centres in the idea that life is communicated through an immediate fellowship with Christ. He departed from our sight, only that He might return as an inward, all-pervading presence, and abide with His people for ever. It was John who first gave clear and adequate expression to this view of the Christian life, as nothing else than a continual communion with the invisible Lord. Paul had already made approaches to this conception, but he was hampered on the one hand by his theory of a future Parousia, on the other hand by his separation of the exalted life of Christ from the bygone earthly life. To the Fourth Evangelist these complications of the simple religious idea have ceased to exist. Jesus returned in the same act by which He rose from the dead, and His larger invisible life is only the continuation of His earthly life. As He called His disciples into fellowship with Him, so He calls men still, and in this fellowship they receive of His divine gift. Tradition has assigned the Gospel to an eye-witness of the Saviour's life, a beloved disciple who was nearer to Him than any other. While in its literal sense this account of the authorship cannot be substantiated, we can yet

acknowledge its essential truth. The Gospel is indeed the transcript of a personal experience. This evangelist, who wrote nearly a century after the event, was not dependent on a secondary knowledge, but had himself communed with Christ and testified of those things which he had heard and seen.

(4) Affirming as it does the continual presence of Jesus with His people, the Gospel has secured to Christianity a principle of inward life and ever-fresh development. Jesus was the Word, the final and absolute revelation of God to man. But His earthly appearance, instead of exhausting the revelation, was only the beginning of it. The Lord would come again as an indwelling Spirit, and would interpret ever more fully the message He had spoken on earth, and unfold it in new aspects according to the needs of each succeeding time. The Fourth Gospel is itself the supreme illustration of this side of its own teaching. It identifies the Jesus of history with the eternal Christ who reveals Himself to faith. It represents Him as speaking, not in the words that He literally uttered, but in new words consonant with the changed conditions of a later day. For this message contained in his Gospel John claims a validity equal to that of the recorded message. He feels that he also is expressing the mind of Christ as it has been revealed to him in immediate and personal communion; and for all believers in the after-times he vindicates the same privilege. They have access for themselves to Jesus Christ. Besides the tradition of His teaching, they

possess His living Spirit to guide them to all truth. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; for it shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

Christian piety in all ages has nurtured itself on the Fourth Gospel, which has been to the Church at large what it was to Luther, "the precious and only Gospel, far to be preferred above the others." The appeal which it has thus made to the deepest religious instincts of mankind may be largely explained from this very fact, that it is not the work of a literal eye-witness. It describes the Saviour not merely as He was, within the narrow limits of His life on earth, but as He is for ever, to those who have known and loved Him. When Jesus seemed to have departed, when the hope that He would come again had almost disappeared, John found the way back into His presence. He discovered that the Lord was still near, that after the little time of parting He had returned, never more to leave His people. Millions in the times since have responded to the message of this unknown disciple. He has taught them how they who have not seen, and yet have believed, may draw near to Christ, and, abiding with Him, have life through His name.

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